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Monasticism and Civilization

BY
Very Rev. John B. O'Connor, O.P., P.G.

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To my Father, in life an inspiration,
and in death, a blessed memory.

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PREFACE

IN the following pages the author has endeavored to convey to his readers no exhaustive story of a subject which would require, if anything like completion were attempted, a library of no mean proportions. His purpose has been merely to bring his subject in general outline to the attention of his readers, Catholic and non-Catholic. For this reason many monastic institutions and personages, no less worthy of notice than those cited, and many monastic achievements of no small importance in the work of reclaiming Europe from the strangling grip of barbarism, have been studiously omitted. But while they have failed to receive individual mention, their type and their merits will be found to have been adequately set forth in the descriptions of similar institutions and their works as outlined in the pages of this volume.

Therefore, the author's task, and it has not been easy, has been largely one of selection. The volumes formally treating of this subject in our language are neither numerous nor of sufficient brevity for one whose reading is not in the nature of scholarly research. The present contribution to the subject is for the man who must obtain his

information in his brief respites from daily toil. For others who may peruse these pages, the footnotes and citations will indicate the sources from which a fuller knowledge of the subject may be drawn.

The purpose for which this volume was prepared has seemed the more practical for the reason that its subject is one that has seldom received fair treatment at the hands of non-Catholic writers. Quick enough to condemn what they considered the abuses of the monastic system, they have not always given a just meed of praise to the merit they could not deny. The glorious part this system played in developing and guiding the spiritual powers of men, its incomparable work of leading Europe out of the wreck and ruin of barbarism and into the blessings of civilization, has usually been but grudgingly told and with sufficient qualifications to neutralize its merit.

In the present account of monasticism the writer has confined himself to the exact meaning of the word "monk." For this reason he has excluded from his pages the splendid contributions to the work of civilization of Franciscans, Carmelites, Augustinians, Dominicans, and the other great families of friars produced by the Middle Ages.

Not a little of the matter contained in the present volume originally appeared in a series of articles on the same subject in the Holy Name Journal of New York. Some of this matter has been recast and augmented by the addition of notes obtained from a more extensive study of the subject.

J. B. O'C.

Feast of the Assumption, 1921.

MONASTICISM AND CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER I

MONASTICISM AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

IN discussing monasticism in relation to modern civilization, we shall confine our considerations to that institution and its works as represented in the West; for in the East, after the few centuries in which it valiantly fought heresy and produced an Anthony, a Chrysostom, a Basil and a Hilarion, it succumbed to the enervating blight of the Orient, and eventually fell a prey to heresy and schism. It was unfaithful to its mission, unequal to its opportunity, and unworthy of the great Mother that bore it. And so it forfeited the blessing of God and the gratitude and respect of humanity which became

in unstinted measure the priceless possessions of Western monasticism.

As the story of the monks' service to civilization is unfolded, it must be constantly borne in mind that that service was not the primary purpose for which the monastic life was instituted; nor did it probably in any degree enter into the original plans of the great founders and interpreters of monasticism. The monks' magnificent contributions to civilization were over and above the spiritual ends for which Jesus Christ instituted the religious life, and they were prompted by a love of humanity second only to that love of God to which they had irrevocably consecrated their lives. Extraordinary, therefore, and priceless as was the work performed by the monks in behalf of mankind, it could not be otherwise than secondary and incidental to the sublime task of achieving the perfection of divine love which constituted the immediate and primary purpose of their religious existence.

The clearing of primeval forests, the reclamation of fetid swamps, the cultivation of vast deserts, the preservation of classic literature, the diffusion of the blessings of education, the liberating of serfs—all these, in a human way, are magnificent achievements which, as long as the world endures, cannot fail to challenge the gratitude and praise of men. But in spite of all this

it must never be lost sight of that the supreme glory of monasticism is that it realized in the souls of the monks themselves the glorious idealism of Jesus Christ as illustrated in His life and teachings. To fulfil His law literally, to make His life the inspiration of theirs, to follow in the footsteps of Him who had said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"—this was the monk's aim, this his accomplishment. The general means he applied to the attainment of this end was an organized ascetism, of which the principal elements were mortification and prayer, in addition, of course, to the sacraments. How effective it was in realizing its aims is witnessed by the innumerable army of saints, canonized and otherwise, that monasticism has given to the Church; the countless souls it has drawn from worldly ways and lovingly bent to the yoke of Christ; and the immeasurable glory it has given to God.

The individual monk, therefore, is a man who in response to a divine call embraces a state of life the immediate end of which is religious perfection. The formal and obligatory means of its attainment are the vows of voluntary poverty, perpetual chastity and entire obedience; to which is added in the case of a Benedictine the vow "of stability," by which he is bound to continue his entire religious life in the monastery in which his

vows were made. To these appointed instru ments of perfection was added that of living un der a rule approved by the Church. Translate into the acts of his daily life this meant that hi entire existence was given over to labor, praye and the observance of his vows. It meant tha he freely renounced all innocent and legitimat pleasures and privileges, forswore all honors emoluments and ambitions, and supported him self, as a member of the corporate body to whic he belonged, by his daily toil. His stock o clothes was limited to his immediate needs an was of the roughest texture. His food was re duced to a working minimum and was austerel plain. His cot was a hard one and its use wa confined to what was barely sufficient for the res of his toil-worn body. Beyond this his time wa spent before the altar or behind the plow, in th scriptorium or the workshop. And this régim was ordained to subjugate the body, that the sou might take on the liberty of Christ. Whateve is added to this scheme of life must be of secon dary importance and not of necessity connecte with his ideal.

Consequently, we must not judge the civilizin influence of the monks, the tremendous thing they did for society and humanity, as though the were the works of professional humanitarian whose lives were dedicated to these achievement

in the execution of which they were but following a profession in which they had been carefully trained. Had the monks contributed nothing to the reconstruction of society, to the advancement of civilization, to the material betterment of the world, they could not justly have been deemed deserving of censure. Such was not their vocation nor their sphere of life. For this reason it adds immensely to the credit and fame of their glorious accomplishments that they assumed these tasks gratuitously, purely from a supernaturalized love of their fellow-men.

It is necessary to bear all this well in mind when considering the superhuman works of these consecrated apostles of civilization, who during three long and momentous centuries were the principal bulwark of society against the tidal waves of barbarism that swept down on Europe from every side. It was they, and they alone, who carried to a successful issue the tremendous undertaking of mollifying the rampant invader; softening the rudeness of his manners and the harshness of his spirit; familiarizing him with the restraints of Christian morality, and bringing home to him, with convincing power, the necessity of observing the fundamental principles of law and order; instructing him in the use of the arts and instruments of industry and social progress; in a word, of assimilating, civilizing and

Christianizing twenty odd Barbarian tribes. Speaking of the moral uplift exercised by the monks, Kingsley says: "Through their monasteries the masses first began to have a history; because through them they ceased to be masses, and became first persons and men, and then, gradually, a people. That last the monasteries could not make them, but they educated them for becoming a people; and in this way they brought out in each man the sense of individual responsibility. They taught him, whether warrior or cripple, prince or beggar, that he had an immortal soul, for which each must give like account to God."[1] To overlook the monumental achievements of the monks while dwelling voluminously on the sins and shortcomings of a very small number of their brethren, has been the studied practice of many so-called historians; and this while in the very enjoyment of the blessings won for them at such cost by these same monks in the early Middle Ages.

The world had indeed come to a deplorable pass when St. Benedict, the patriarch of monasticism in the West, was born towards the end of the fifth century. The Barbarians, whose hostile movements had begun with the migration of the Goths from the wilds of Scandinavia as early

[1] *The Roman and the Teuton*, by Charles Kingsley, London, 1906. Lecture IX, *The Monk a Civilizer*, p. 214.

as the second century, tore first one, then another, of its provinces from the Roman Empire. Across Europe it came, this flood of human barbarism, rushing down the valley of the Danube towards Byzantium, through Germany, across the Rhine, over the Vosges and into Gaul. Neither the Alps nor the Pyrenees could stay that inundating flood, and over these formidable barriers it flowed into Italy and Spain. From the heights of the Caucasus it precipitated itself on the East, and even the Holy Land felt the polluting touch of its unclean waters. With fire and sword the invading hordes surged on, marking their wake with death, destruction and desolation. Cities were given over to the flames, and the magnificent institutions of ancient civilization utterly destroyed. Society melted at their touch; government, law, and order were replaced with anarchy and chaos; human life was sacrificed in appalling hecatombs of wanton cruelty.

All southern and eastern Europe had felt the blighting influence of the invading nations. Five times had Italy been ravaged: twice by the Visigoths under Alaric; again by the Teuton tribes led by Ratger; by the Huns under Attila; and finally by the Vandals under Genseric. Rome had been twice sacked, in 410 by Alaric and by Genseric in 455. Just four years before St. Benedict was born, the Roman Empire, founded by

Augustus, once numbering 200,000,000 souls and supposedly indestructible, came to an end under the crushing hand of Odoacer.

For this conquest by the invaders, the Romans had themselves all unconsciously paved the way. Possessed of immeasurable wealth, which world-wide conquest and dominion had made possible, given over to a sybaritic manner of living, addicted to all the vices that are the inevitable consequences of such conditions, the manhood of the Roman Empire lost its virility and its martial spirit. Represented by such sons, the Empire was unable to withstand the shock of the fearless and invincible Barbarians and under their unremitting assaults finally tottered and fell, to rise no more. Europe was now in the hands of untutored men who neither appreciated nor understood the worth or significance of the political and social institutions they found in the country of their vanquished foes. Moreover, their contempt for the usages of civilization prompted them utterly to wipe out all that they found not in keeping with their own barbarous manner of life. Clearly a supreme crisis had arrived. Either Europe must plunge into the black and hopeless abyss of barbarism, and thus arrest the progress of mankind for centuries, or else some one must invest the Barbarian with the graces, virtues, and ideals of Christian civilization. It is fortunate for the

world of today that such a one was found in the person of the monk.

To understand what the fall of the Empire—and especially of its capital—meant to the Romans, it must be borne in mind that they looked upon both as eternal. Indeed, they often spoke of *the eternity of the Empire.* Consequently, their civilization was destined to endure forever. The capital city, the sanctuary of that civilization, was it not proudly called the Eternal City? And, indeed, the Empire, with its far-flung provinces and its invincible legions, seemed well fitted to endure till the end of time. But unfortunately for the world at large, the promise of Rome's genius and Rome's civilization was not to be realized. Once the irresistible drive of the hostile Barbarians began, the dissolution of Rome also commenced, not to end till the Empire was no more.

At first the Roman people contemplated the situation with utter bewilderment, unable to grasp the meaning of anything so absolutely unique in the experience of their country. But once they realized that the army's reverses were neither local nor temporary, that the territory lost from month to month was irretrievably lost, the conditions that resulted were appalling. "The Roman Empire," says Harnack, "the ancient world, was preparing itself to die, and its death-throes

were frightful. Tumult, blood, poverty, and plague were within, and without was pressure on all sides from Barbarian hordes. What was there to set up in opposition? There was no longer the power of a state conscious of its might, nor the strength begotten of a unified and tried ideal of organization. On the contrary, it was an empire which was falling to pieces, and scarcely held together by a sinking and decomposing culture."[1]

Accordingly, when the erstwhile invincible legions were beaten, broken and hurled back, when province after province was lost to the Empire before the onrushing Barbarians, the Roman people stood aghast. They could not understand. And when in 410, for the first time in six hundred years, the enemy stood before the walls of the Eternal City, and when on that mournful and bitter day, a few weeks later, he stood for the first time in eight hundred years *within* the walls, their cup of sorrow and despair was full. Rome and civilization were synonymous. Rome had fallen; therefore, civilization was no more. Indeed, the end of all things must necessarily be at hand. And when the Catholic citizen of the Empire saw that not even the Faith of Christ had escaped; that its magni-

[1] *Monasticism.* Translated by Rev. Charles R. Gillett; New York, 1895, pp, 22-23.

ficent growth resulting from the edict of freedom issued by Constantine was halted by the heathen invader; that Arianism was spreading like wildfire among Barbarians and Romans—he, too, in many instances, was forced to believe that the end of the world had come.

The moral effect of all this was fearful to contemplate. The timid gave way to despair and the vicious plunged into every kind of excess as though to satiate themselves with sinful pleasures while yet there was time. "Some wished," says Kurth, "to fall in a last intoxication at the banquet of civilization, crowned with roses and drunk with wine; others, wrapped in the folds of the old Roman flag, awaited the fatal blow with stoic despair."[1] In the vividly descriptive words of Montalembert, "Confusion, corruption, despair and death were everywhere; social dismemberment seemed complete. Authority, morals, law, sciences, arts, religion herself might have been supposed condemned to irremediable ruin."[2] Cardinal Newman could well say that St. Benedict "found the world, physical and social, in ruins, and his mission was to restore it."[3]

Such was the state of affairs in the once proud and powerful Empire of Rome when the legions

[1] *The Church at the Turning-Points of History*, by Godefroid Kurth, translated by Mons. Victor Day, p. 51.

[2] *Monks of the West*, by Count de Montalembert. Translation; Boston, v. 1, p. 306.

[3] *Select Essays*. Camelot Series; London, p. 222.

of the Lord came to place a guiding hand on the destinies of future ages. The advent of the monks, it will be seen, was coincident with the greatest crisis the world has ever known. "They came at the appointed time," says Montalembert, "to replace the martyrs and to restrain the Barbarians."[1]

While the Council of Nicaea was in the midst of its deliberations, Pachomius was in the act of forming, at Tabenna, on the Nile, the first monastery of cenobitical monks. This was the type of monasticism which was to play such an important part in the salvation of European civilization. As early as 387, according to St. Augustine, monasteries had found their way into Rome and Milan. So far as the evidence of history attests, the first monastery in the West that was governed by a well-developed rule strictly applied, was that established at Ligugé, near Poitiers, by St. Martin of Tours; and subsequently one near Tours, when he had become bishop of that see. The latter is known to history as the monastery of Marmoûtier. This famous monastery was erected in 371, a year after St. Martin had taken possession of his diocese. In 410, the same year that Rome was taken by Alaric, a monastery was founded by St. Honoratus on the Island of Lérins, in the Mediterranean, at the

[1] *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 172.

southern extremity of France. This establishment became a celebrated school of theology and philosophy as well as of sanctity. The well-known ascetical writer, John Cassian, built the abbey of St. Victor at Marseilles in 415; while the monastery of Condat was founded some ten years later. So numerous were the affiliated institutions of the latter house that it is said "they made the Burgundian country a new Thebaid"; and so intense was the religious spirit, and so thorough the theological training imparted in these famous monasteries, that their members were eagerly sought by the people of Gaul as pastors and bishops. From Lérins alone came the illustrious bishops of the dioceses of Arles, Avignon, Lyons, Troyes, Fréjus, Valence, Nice, Vence, Apt, Carpentras, Antibes and Saintes. In all, this great monastery gave to the Church twelve archbishops, twelve bishops, and more than one hundred martyrs.

How rapidly monasticism spread throughout Gaul, may be judged from the single fact that in 397, at the funeral of St. Martin of Tours, who had himself established the first monastery in that country, there were present two thousand monks, and these, of course, were only a portion of those within a few days' foot-journey of Tours. As a matter of fact, by the end of the fifth cen-

tury monasticism had spread throughout Christendom.

The above-named, and countless other monastic institutes of the cenobitical type, had come from the East and settled within the various provinces of the Roman Empire. It was not long before the advance of the Barbarians placed them on the very frontier of Roman territory. Here they stood, calm and intrepid amid the seething, swirling tide of war, serenely exercising their ministry of peace and civilization almost in the very heat of battle. In this manner the invading hordes for the first time came into contact with the institution of monasticism, which was to win them to Christ and make them the pioneers of a new civilization superior to the one they had destroyed.

CHAPTER II

THE BENEDICTINES

BUT great as was their service to mankind, it was not to these monastic institutes that the chief rôle in the work of civilizing the Barbarians was to be entrusted. That was to be awarded to an institute founded by a man who was not born till four years after the fall of the Empire had been completed under the assaults of Odoacer. In 480, then, there was born in Nursia, Italy, a man who was destined to stand forth through all succeeding ages as one of the greatest promoters of civilization the world has ever known. His name was Benedict. At Subiaco, some thirty-eight miles from Rome, he built his first monastery, and here, according to some, wrote his Rule after many years spent as a holy anchorite in the wilderness. He had no difficulty in gathering around him a considerable number of disciples who, disgusted with the world, its vice, turmoil and confusion, its orgies, vileness and sin, desired to give their whole life to God

and their soul's salvation under the guidance of this great master of the spiritual life.

In his own day and person it was given to St. Benedict to inaugurate the work of christianizing and civilizing the Barbarians—a work which his devoted children were to develop to such colossal proportions, and with such supreme success. In his own day it was given to him to begin the work of conciliation and mutual good will by acting as a pacifier and judge between the Catholics and Goths of Italy. So great was his fame as a promoter of peace and concord that the Ostrogoth King, Totila, successor of Theodoric, and conqueror of Justinian's Byzantine army, went out of his way to visit him in his monastic home at Monte Cassino.

But it was Benedict's intention that this work should have other apostles than the founder himself. It was not to be the work of one man, however great that one might be. Rather was it to be the work of a mature policy, built upon exalted principles, unfailingly powerful enough to stimulate their exponents to the exercise of a charity which was human as well as divine; and of a system that through innumerable agents of similar spirit and purpose would spread its salutary influence over the whole of Europe. Touched by the grace of God, and attracted by the fame of the saintly patriarch, the Barbarians in large

numbers sought admission first to Subiaco, and then to Monte Cassino, the second monastery which the holy Patriarch, about 520, founded a short distance from Naples. In pursuit of the ideals of the religious life they came into daily contact with brother monks who in other days had stood before an envious and admiring world as representatives of some of the Empire's most aristocratic families. Here, then, was a splendid opportunity for mutual study and understanding. In the great melting-pot at Monte Cassino, Roman and Barbarian began to know and appreciate one another, and grow more tolerant of one another's faults. In the Barbarian the Roman found many natural virtues of a rugged and virile character to admire and imitate. While through the courtesy, refinement and culture of the Roman the Barbarian discovered his own deficiencies and defects. Under the influence of a common religious purpose, under the inspiration of a common Rule, both became true Christians and religious men according to the model of their common Saviour.

Even in the relatively short span of Benedict's own years, the sons of the noblest families in Italy, as well as the humblest of the Barbarians, came in increasing numbers to Monte Cassino. Tribal chiefs and predatory barons laid aside the habiliments of war to put on the religious habit

and pursue the paths of peace by the side of the monk whose entire life had been given over to the peaceful things of God. Truly it seemed as if the prophecy of Isaias, "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb," had been realized amid the storm and stress of the Barbarian invasions. The same impelling causes, disgust for the turmoil, strife and licentiousness of the world, and an irrepressible yearning for the peace and righteousness of Christ, brought high-born and low-born, strong and weak alike to the gates of the monastery. "And so it befalls," says Kingsley, "that in the early Middle Ages, the cleverest men were inside the convent, trying, by moral influence and superior intellect, to keep those outside from tearing each other to pieces."[1]

This daily intermingling of all classes and conditions of society on terms of perfect equality, could not but create a spirit of democracy, even if that excellent social virtue had not been formally and explicitly inculcated by the Rule of the institute. "The Middle Age records," says the writer just quoted, "give us a long list of kings, princes, nobles, who having done (as they held) their work in the world outside, went into these convents to try their hands at what seemed to them (and often was) better work than the per-

[1] *The Roman and the Teuton*, by Charles Kingsley; London, 1906: p. 220.

petual coil of war, intrigue and ambition, which was not the crime, but the necessary fate, of a ruler in the Middle Ages. Tired of work and tired of life, tired, too, of vain luxury and vain wealth, they fled to the convent, as to the only place where a man could get a little peace, think of God, and save his soul; and recollected, as they worked with their own hands by the side of the lowest-born of their subjects, that they had a human flesh and blood, a human immortal soul, like those whom they had ruled."[1] Two such royal personages were Carloman, the Frank, and Rachis, the Lombard. Through a singular coincidence they simultaneously and freely sought, and were cheerfully granted, shelter and rest from the turmoil and confusion of the eighth century, in the monastery of Monte Cassino.

And so the first lesson, which the newly admitted candidate for the monastic life, whether king or serf, learned on the very threshold of the monastery was one—a vital one under the circumstances—of Christian democracy—the absolute equality, from a social point of view, of all who dwelt in the monastery, yoke-fellows with Christ. "Whether the novice be rich or poor," so reads the Benedictine Rule, "bond or free, young or old, we must not enquire; neither age nor condi-

[1] *Ibidem*, p. 218.

tion matters among monks; *for God has made no difference between the soul of the slave and that of the freeman.*" Here was the great lesson of social democracy taught to Barbarian and aristocrat, to conqueror and conquered, by a monk, at a time when the world was divided between slave and freeman. Such were the principles instilled into the minds of those who came to Benedict to acquire the truths of eternity unto life everlasting.

In this manner the monasteries became fonts of social regeneration and sanctuaries of peace and industry, where men pursued the higher paths of Christian conduct and, undisturbed by the ceaseless conflict of races, untainted by the spirit of debauchery into which Roman and Barbarian alike had plunged, prepared to reconquer the world for the new reign of Christian civilization. It is no wonder, therefore, that the decent element of Roman and Barbarian manhood, whether in the Eternal City or in the most distant province, came to them for hope, strength, consolation and guidance. "They came out again," as Montalembert says, "to spread themselves over all the West; missionaries and husbandmen who were soon to become the doctors and pontiffs, the artists and legislators, the historians and poets of the new world. . . Less than a century after the death of Benedict, all that barbarism

had won from civilization was reconquered."[1] Going forth from the hallowed precincts of their monastic homes they became in their turn apostles of truth and righteousness among the Gentiles.

From these schools of sanctity they went out into a world of anarchy, violence and debauchery to propagate the illuminating and uplifting lessons they had learned in their cloister. If in the monastery there was given to Roman and Barbarian an opportunity for mutual study and understanding, there was now given them, in the larger field of the apostolate, the priceless opportunity of mutual interpretation, to the mutual advantage of their respective races. By the hundreds these troubled children of the earth had sought in the monasteries of the Benedictines, refuge and rest from the weight and weariness of sin; and then, quickened by the spirit of religion, purified and strengthened by its discipline, heartened by the glory of its vision, they went forth ardent, fearless, indefatigable apostles to those sitting in darkness, determined to share with them the light of Faith that shone with supernal brightness upon their own souls, to light the path to everlasting life.

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[1] *Monks of the West;* v. 1, p. 344.

And what a glorious apostolate was theirs! In a world that seemed to have forgotten its Creator, they walked with God, and, whether before the altar of the abbey church or in the harvest field, they consciously dwelt in His presence. While those around them were given over to murder, rapine and battle, these humble followers of Christ pursued the paths of peace and fruitful industry. In an age that recognized might alone as right, and wallowed before the shrines of lust and drunkenness, they practiced the principles of eternal justice, and by their voluntary austerities taught men self-control and self-repression. While their contemporaries struggled and intrigued, each to snatch something of his neighbor's possessions, they rejoiced to give of what they had for the benefit and happiness of their fellow-men. Nor were they animated in the practice of these virtues, and in the exercise of these benefactions, by any hope of earthly recompense. For their reward they looked alone to heaven.

In a general way their contributions to humanity have been well summed up in the following words of a famous Anglican divine: "They restored again and again sound law and just government, when the good old Teutonic laws, and the Roman law also, were trampled under foot amid the lawless strife of ambition and fury.

Under their shadow sprang up the towns with their corporate rights, their middle classes, their artisan classes. They were the physicians, the almsgivers, the relieving officers, the schoolmasters of the Middle Age world. They first taught us the great principle of the division of labor, to which we owe at this moment, that England is what she is, instead of being covered with a horde of peasants, each making and producing everything for himself, and starving each upon his rood of ground. They transcribed or composed all the books of the then world; many of them spent their lives in doing nothing but writing; and the number of books, even of those to be found in single monasteries, considering the tedious labor of copying, is altogether astonishing. They preserved to us the treasures of classical antiquity. They discovered for us the germs of all our modern inventions. They brought in from abroad arts and new knowledge; and while they taught men to know that they had a common humanity, a common Father in heaven, taught them also to profit by one another's wisdom instead of remaining in isolated ignorance. They, too, were the great witnesses against feudal caste. With them was neither high-born nor low-born, rich nor poor: worth was their only test; the meanest serf entering there might become the lord of knights and vassals, the counsellor of

kings and princes. Men may talk of democracy —those old monasteries were the most democratic institutions the world had ever till then seen. 'A man's a man for a' that' was not only talked of in there, but carried out in practice—only not in anarchy, and as a cloak for licentiousness: but under those safeguards of strict discipline, and almost military order, without which men may call themselves free, and yet be only slaves to their own passions. Yet paradoxical as it may seem, in those monasteries was preserved the sacred fire of modern liberty through those feudal centuries, when all the outside world was doing its best to trample it out. Remember, as a single instance, that in the abbot's lodging in Bury St. Edmunds, the Magna Charta was drawn out, before being presented to John at Runnymede."[1] Such, in the eyes of one not of the household of the Faith, was the monumental service conferred on humanity by the monasticism of the Middle Ages.

If we listen with astonishment to this eloquent recital of the deeds of the ancient monks, it is with similar sentiments that we shall hearken to the following eulogy on the character of the monks themselves. As in the former instance, this tribute is also from the pen of a non-Catho-

[1] *The Roman and the Teuton,* by Charles Kingsley; London, 1906, p. 239.

lic; but more, it is the utterance of one from whom have come but few appreciations of a nature complimentary to the Catholic Church or its institutions. "Originally, and for many hundred years after their foundation," says the historian Froude, "the regular clergy were the finest body of men of which mankind in its chequered history can boast. They lived to illustrate, in systematic simplicity, the universal law of sacrifice. In their three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, they were indeed everything that makes life delightful. Their business on earth was to labor and to pray; to labor for other men's bodies, and to pray for other men's souls. Wealth flowed in upon them. The world, in its instinctive loyalty to greatness, laid its land and its possessions at their feet; and for a time was seen the notable spectacle of property administered as a trust, from which the owners reaped no benefit, except increase of toil."[1] Surely it is not to be wondered at that men of such high character and such enlightened service were destined to become the regenerators of society and the saviours of western civilization. They alone possessed the guarantee of that perpetuity that was necessary for a work which was to be spread over five hundred years, and then, in less heroic form was to continue for centuries longer. They alone possessed

[1] *History of England,* by J. A. Froude; Ed. 1856, v. 2, p. 407.

the necessary detachment and unselfishness to labor for their fellow-men. They alone, through the consecration of religion, could supernaturalize that service and make it effective unto their own souls' salvation. And all these things were necessary if the great work was to be accomplished.

That the glorious service of monasticism in the past is, according to existing needs, its generous promise for the future, is the conviction of a well-known Episcopalian historian and architect. "Monasticism," he says, "of the type established it would seem, once for all, by St. Benedict of Nursia in the sixth century, is an essential element of Christian civilization, recurring ever and again when the things against which it contends have achieved supremacy and brought society to the point of ruin. In the sixth, the eleventh, and the sixteenth centuries it had its most brilliant manifestations, and already it is preparing again for its identical office of social regeneration."[1]

[1] *The Substance of Gothic*, by Ralph Adams Cram; Boston, 1917, p. 112.

CHAPTER III

MONASTICISM AND AGRICULTURE

AFTER the foregoing review of the service of monasticism, we now come to the consideration in detail of those individual works which in the ensemble constitute the monks' claim to the gratitude of mankind. Of these the first is agriculture. In an age when the industrial arts were in their infancy where they were at all known; when the constant movement and conflict of armed forces drew from the legitimate fields of industry so large a portion of the laboring class; at a time when a man's possessions consisted largely of what he raised on his own poor little rood of ground, or what fortune might lay at his feet in the chase—in times such as these it was but natural that the monks should give their first and their best thought to agriculture. For the employment of their own large community, as well as of those who, tired of war and its carnage, had settled around the abbey in quest of the pursuits of peace,

agriculture offered the only hope. To agriculture, therefore, they addressed themselves with their wonted industry and intelligence; and to the fact that the monks accepted the responsibility of agricultural revival, though it was outside their scheme of life, it is due that Europe was spared the famine which would have inevitably followed on the heels of such prolonged strife and vast wastage. To their enlightened leadership we owe it also that the science of the old Roman agriculture did not utterly perish with many another priceless secrets of antiquity. That these conclusions are not lacking the corroboratory support of some of the best known modern historians, is evident in the light of the following extracts from their writings. "We owe," says Hallam, "the agricultural restoration of a great part of Europe to the monks."[1] "The Benedictines have been," says Guizot, "the great clearers of land in Europe. A colony, a little swarm of monks settled in places nearly uncultivated, often in the midst of a pagan population, in Germany, for instance, or in Brittany; there, at once missionaries and laborers, they accomplished their double service, through peril and fatigue."[2] Charles Kingsley witnesses to the uni-

[1] *Middle Ages*, by Henry Hallam; New York, 1882, v. 2, p. 548.
[2] *Civilisation en France*, par François P. Guizot; Leçon 14.

versal influence of the monks on agriculture in the following terms: "To these missionary colonizers Europe owes, I verily believe, among a hundred benefits, this which all Englishmen will appreciate: that Roman agriculture was not only revived in the countries which were once the Empire, but spread from thence eastward and northward, into the principal wilderness of the Teuton and Slavonic races."[1]

In the sixth and seventh centuries, the followers of the great Irish apostle, Columbanus, brought under cultivation the entire northeastern part of France, as far as the lower Seine. St. Boniface and his disciples were the first in Bavaria to engage in agriculture after the Barbarians' invasion. In Germany the Benedictines of Fulda brought under cultivation a tract of land fifty miles in circumference between Hesse, Franconia and Thuringia. They held thousands of farms in Bavaria and Swabia. Three thousand pairs of oxen were employed by the Benedictines of Polironna in their agricultural labors. The waving wheat- and cornfields of Molesme, Colan and Cîteaux were once barren moors, covered with briars and thorns till made fertile by the untiring labors of the Benedictines. And while the monks of St. Benedict were thus employed, those of Prémontré were redeeming the deserts

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 220.

of Poland and the forests of Coucy in France. "The richest districts of France," says Montalembert, "trace their prosperity to this origin; witness amongst a thousand other places that portion of La Brie between Meaux and Jouarre, once covered by a vast forest, the first inhabitant of which was the Irish monk Fiacre, patron saint of French gardeners."[1]

What the monks accomplished in agriculture on the continent, they duplicated in the islands of Great Britain. "Of the Anglo-Saxon husbandry, we may remark," says Turner, "that Domesday Survey gives us some indication that the cultivation of the Church lands was much superior to that of any other order of society. They have much less wood upon them, and less common or pasture: and what they had appears often in smaller and more irregular pieces; while their meadow was more abundant, and in more numerous distributions."[2]

There are very few things in modern agriculture that were not known to those keenly observant students of nature. To the vital task of crop-raising they applied themselves, at one of the most critical periods in the world's history, with all the industry, intelligence and patience to be

[1] *The Monks of the West*, v. 1, p. 532.
[2] *History of the Anglo-Saxons*, v. 2, p. 167.

expected from men whose motives were not earthly but divine, whose rewards were not of time but of eternity. Many of the things now regarded as elementary in agriculture, they discovered and introduced. They practiced the custom of letting the land lie fallow for a year after it had borne crops for a number of years. The rotation of crops, terminating with clover, was also practiced by them. Not only did they produce in abundance the crops indigenous to the soil they worked, but they introduced many others from foreign parts, and most successfully naturalized them in the places they colonized.

The system of colonization, by which for the last fifty years we have been populating the sparsely settled parts of our own country with foreigners and others, was practiced, Chateaubriand tells us, by the Benedictine monks of the Middle Ages. "Fontevrault," he says, "was a real colony, established by Robert d'Arbrissel in a wilderness on the confines of Anjou and Brittany. Whole families sought an asylum under the direction of the Benedictines, in whose vicinity were formed communities of widows, unmarried women, laymen, infirm persons and aged soldiers. All became husbandmen after the example of the Fathers, who themselves felled trees, guided the plow, sowed the grain and crowned that portion of France with flourishing crops which it had

never borne before. The colony was soon obliged to send away a portion of its members and to give up to the other deserts the surplus of its laborious bands. Raoul de la Futaye, a companion of Robert, settled in the forest Nid du Merle; and Vital, another Benedictine, in the woods of Savigny."[1] All of these, and many other places that might be cited, were colonies formed from the surplus population of the above-mentioned parent colony of Fontevrault, which converted barren wastes into fertile and productive fields.

So successful were the methods employed in improving the soil, so obvious the beneficial results accruing therefrom, so great the improvements resulting to the entire surrounding country from the tireless, intelligent, and unselfish labors of the monks, that the fame of it all spread on every side. As a result, many were attracted from a distance with the hope of sharing in the fruits of monastic agriculture. In this way what had been an uninhabited region when the monks first took possession, rapidly filled up with settlers for whom manual labor had lost its terrors. From all of which it is apparent that the monks were not only the saviours of agriculture when it

[1] *The Genius of Christianity*, by Viscount de Chateaubriand, trans. by Charles I. White, Baltimore, 1857, p. 645.

was about to pass from the minds of men, but its propagators as well. It is certainly true, therefore, what Chateaubriand says: "Our ancestors were barbarians whom Christianity was obliged to teach even the art of raising the necessaries of life."[1] Nor does President Goodell over-state the case for the Anglo-Saxon monks when he says: "They were the true fathers of English agriculture, which thanks to their traditions and example, has become the first agriculture in the world. . . . Owing to the intelligence and industry of the monks, England in the eleventh century could boast that its agriculture was far in advance of the majority of the countries of Europe; that it had less forest and heath; a greater acreage under cultivation; and more rich pasture."[2] The same authority adds: "I have outlined to you in barest manner today the work of these grand old monks during a period of fifteen hundred years. They saved agriculture when nobody else could save it. They practiced it under a new life and new conditions when no one else dared undertake it. They advanced it along every line of theory and practice; and when they perished they left a void which generations have not filled."[3]

In fruit culture they were equally progressive

[1] *Ibid*, p. 644.
[2] *The Influence of the Monks in Agriculture*, pp. 7 and 20.
[3] *Ibid*, p. 22.

and successful. They improved the different varieties of fruits and practised the arts of grafting, budding and layering. Along the banks of the Tagus, near Toledo, in Spain, the Benedictines cultivated orange trees on an extensive scale. The monks of Mozat planted great numbers of walnut trees, still so abundant in lower Auvergne. As a rule, they owned the finest orchards in Europe. All Menzing, in the canton of Zug, in Switzerland, produced under their care not only wheat but fruits and nuts, for which it was famous. The nursery of Chartreuse, of Paris, furnished nearly all France with fruit trees up to the time of the French Revolution. The "dean's" (Doyenne) and "Good Christian" (Bon Chretien) pears are names which still recall the efforts of the monks in behalf of fruit culture. Telio, the Benedictine monk, aided by St. Samson, planted an orchard three miles in extent near Dol, in France.

One of the things that contributed largely to the magnificent success of the monks in the matter of agriculture, was the fact that they kept records of the results of their efforts, experiments and experience, in the entire field of agriculture. Through the interchange of visits by the members of the various monasteries, and by means of extensive correspondence, the information thus so carefully preserved was disseminated throughout the entire Benedictine world.

To the cultivation of the vine and to wine-making the monks gave special attention; and in this, as in the field of agriculture, their efforts were attended with complete success. The best vineyards in Germany were planted and owned by them. The vines in the neighborhood of Weilheim and Bissingen, even today said to be the best in Germany, were planted in the Black Forest by the monks of St. Peter. Many of the vineyards along the Rhine, as well as those of Bergstrasse, were planted by the monks of Lorsch. The famous vineyards of Johannesberg owe their origin to the monks of Fulda. In like manner, those of Clos Vougeot owe their inception to the Cistercian monks, while the Benedictines imported vines from Beaume to plant on the banks of the Allier. Vines were also planted by members of monastic houses in Brittany, Normandy and Picardy. The best vineyards of Burgundy, the Rhine and Auvergne, were also the products of their tireless labor. William of Malmesbury boasted that the monastic wines of the valley of Gloucester were not inferior to those of France. In England, also, the monks of Croyland introduced the culture of the vine into the Fens and other places from which it has never entirely disappeared.

In like manner it is to the Benedictine monk, Dom Perignon, of St. Peter's Abbey, Hautvil-

liers-on-the-Marne, that we owe the discovery of champagne. Having been appointed cellarer of the abbey in 1688, he commenced a series of experiments in the blending of wines. The results of his discoveries constitute the fundamental principles used in the manufacturing of that wine even today.

The breeding of horses was of necessity a matter of deep interest to those who followed the work of agriculture, and in this the monastic agriculturists possessed no little skill. In 1537 the monks of Coverham, England, were recommended to the king for the splendid breed of their horses. No less is Sweden indebted to these unknown toilers for its magnificent horses. And, as might be expected from their extensive use of these animals, not a few of the monks were well versed in the veterinary art.

In Burgundy they practiced pisciculture. There is a manuscript extant bearing the date of 1420, in which a monk develops a theory for the artificial propagation of trout. In Ireland they engaged in the salmon fisheries on an extensive scale. Bee-culture and the marketing of honey was another enterprise in which they successfully engaged.

It was the same spirit of Christian altruism that led them to improve in every way the neighborhood in which they found themselves. This

they did by digging ditches, bridging streams, putting down roads, constructing extensive systems of irrigation, thereby increasing the acreage under cultivation, opening up highways of commerce and communication, teaching the people the best methods of agriculture, and finally providing employment for those who, for one reason or another, held no land of their own. In short, as President Goodell of the Massachusetts Agricultural College tells us, "In everything making for progressive agriculture we find them blazing the way, and when the monasteries were suppressed by Henry VIII, a death blow was struck for a time at scientific agriculture and horticulture."[1] At greater length the same author expresses his appreciation of their work in the following terms: "Agriculture was sunk to a low ebb. Marshes covered once fertile fields and the men who should have tilled the land spurned the plow as degrading. The monks left their cells and their prayers to dig ditches and plow fields. The effect was magical. Men once more turned back to a noble but despised industry and peace and plenty supplanted war and poverty. So well recognized were the blessings they brought that an old German proverb among the peasants runs, 'It is good to live under the crozier.' They en-

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

nobled manual labor, which in a degenerate Roman world had been performed exclusively by slaves and among the Barbarians by women. For the monks, it is no exaggeration to say, the cultivation of the soil was like an immense alms spread over the whole country. The abbots and the superiors set the example, and, stripping off their sacerdotal robes, toiled as common laborers."[1]

Of the utmost importance to the ends of agriculture was the conservation of water. To this the monks addressed themselves with the same ingenuity and industry that characterized all their undertakings. By means of dikes they prevented rivers accustomed to overflow their banks, from devastating the surrounding country. At Cîteaux they confined to its banks the river Sarne, whose overflow was not only destructive but of frequent occurrence. They created reserve reservoirs for the superfluous waters with a view to future emergencies. Whenever a spring was found, it was dug out and cleaned and then enclosed in a stone basin for all future time. The water of these springs was also carefully conserved and impartially distributed according to the needs of the people. It was the monks of the Abbey of St. Laurent and St. Martin who first conserved and conducted to Paris the waters of springs going to waste on the mead-

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 10.

ows of St. Gervais and Belleville. The use of water for the purpose of reclamation was taught by the monks of St. Bernard in the system of irrigation they introduced into Lombardy. So well did they do their work that this country became one of the most fertile and productive territories in all Europe.

As a logical consequence of conducting agricultural pursuits on such an extensive scale in a thinly settled country, in which they had to supply every convenience and necessity, they found it necessary to establish markets for the sale of their own produce and stock, as well as those of their neighbors. Accordingly, these were built at the very gate of the abbey and became the trade centres of the surrounding country. Here the crops, flocks and herds of the monks and peasants were disposed of to their mutual advantage. In addition to this, in order that the grain crops might be more speedily converted into food products or made more available for the market, the same foresighted and paternal policy of the monks led them to erect grist mills and place them at the service of the people.

Over and above all this, they rented much of their land to their poor neighbors at merely nominal rates. In addition, they granted them, as Bishop Shahan points out, "perpetuity of tenure, continuous culture of the fields, equality of rents,

new tracts of reclaimed lands, mildness of administration and a minimum of expense in the conduct of their vast properties."[1] It is with reason, therefore, that the well-known architect and historian, Mr. Ralph Cram, says in his scholarly work, *The Substance of Gothic*: "The religious houses were the greatest landlords in the realm and their tenants were envied by those who were under secular landlords, since they themselves were more generously treated in every way."[2]

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[1] *The Middle Ages*, by Thomas J. Shahan; New York, 1904, p. 154.
[2] P. 105.

CHAPTER IV

CHARACTER OF MONASTIC LANDS

SOMETIMES when the sight-seeing tourist contemplates the beautiful surroundings of some ruined abbey—its grass-carpeted meadows, its grain-bearing fields, its heavily burdened orchards and its shady woodlands—prompted either by ignorance or malevolence, he is heard to remark that the medieval monk possessed a keen eye for the beauty spots of the earth. Of course, in the majority of cases, the maker of such remarks is utterly oblivious of the fact that whatever of beauty or utility the abbey domain possessed was for the most part created out of swamps, marshes, deserts, forests, and mountain solitudes, by the intelligence and untiring industry of the monks themselves. "We sometimes hear," says Archbishop Trench of the Anglican Church, "the ignoble observation that the monks knew how to pick out the most fertile spots for themselves; when it would be truer to say that they knew how to make that which had fallen to them, often the waste or the morass which none other cared to cultivate, the best; but

this by the sweat of their brow and the intelligent labor of their hands."[1]

When the Benedictines first settled at Glanfeuil, France, in 543, the whole northern part of the country, inhabited by the Burgundians, was a desolate waste. In the country north of the Rhone, there were six great deserts at the beginning of the sixth century. These were the deserts of Morvan, of the Vosges, of the Reome, of the Jura, the Swiss desert and that of La Gruyere between the Saône and the Aar. Savoy and Switzerland were at that time but little more than a forest. In great part the same was true of all Europe. Invasion after invasion of the Barbarians had either killed off or driven out the population, leaving the land to become sterile, or run to forests.

The onward march of the Barbarians left behind it in ruins the works of a thousand years of civilization. The lands that had been cleared through the long centuries of Roman dominion reverted to forests, and the cultivated fields again became barren heaths. Cities and towns, of course, disappeared as their citizens were led away captive by the victorious invaders. Consequently, at the time the monks began their gigantic work of reconstruction the greater part of

[1] *Lectures on Medieval Church History*, note c. p. 385.

France, Switzerland, Belgium and the Rhine country—of practically all the richest and most populous countries of modern Europe—was covered with virgin forests. They spread over every part of the country, and in unbroken stretches ran from the interior even to the sea. And in these wild timberlands beasts of prey roamed at will. Two-thirds of Western Europe was in this natural and undeveloped state in the early Middle Ages.

Accordingly, when the monks began the reorganization of society and the re-establishment of civilization, with a true conception of the fundamental requirements of their task, they did not seek their field of influence and labor in the crowded cities, nor in the older haunts of departed civilization, nor yet in the fertile and long settled rural districts of the former Empire. On the contrary, they sought out the primeval forest, the arid moor and the noisome fen, where the jealousy of men would not be apt to follow, and where their only conflicts would be with the untamed forces of nature.

Into this leafy fastness, this trackless forest, the monks plunged in every direction, and with utter fearlessness and sublime courage addressed themselves to the stupendous task of subjugating nature to the needs and purposes of mankind. And this they did without arms with which to pro-

monks. The lands they gave were invariably covered with trees, or surrounded by marshes, or arid, or under water the greater part of the year. "The devastation of war," says Hallam, "from the fifth to the eleventh century, rendered land the least costly of all gifts, though it must be the most valuable and permanent. Many of the grants to monasteries which strike us as enormous, were of districts absolutely wasted, which would probably have been reclaimed by no other means."[1]

Such were the benefactions royalty conferred on the monasteries of Europe. Only the self-sacrifice, the religious and humanitarian purposes, and the highly organized efforts of these consecrated toilers could convert such places into healthful, productive and profitable farm lands. But to men devoted to the ends for which they entered the religious state such places were positively attractive. Indeed, the harder and more unpromising the place allotted to them, the better they liked it; for it afforded them an opportunity to practice penance, and penance was one of the appointed means of their sanctification. "The Cistercians," we are told, "invariably reared their lonely homes in undrained valleys,

[1] *Views of the State of Europe During the Middle Ages*, New York, 1882, v. 2, p. 548.

unreclaimed wastes, amid the brush of dead forests, full of unhealthy influences and ague-stricken fens, in order, as St. Bernard says, 'that they might have the thought of death ever before their eyes, and with the hope of a better country to cheer their ascetic lives.' "[1]

Even when the site of the monastery was a matter of the monks' own choosing it was, as a rule, of the same uninviting character as that bestowed on them by the interested rulers of the land. "They chose," says Hallam, "for the sake of retirement secluded regions which they cultivated with the labor of their hands. Several charters are extant, granted to convents and sometimes to laymen, of lands which they had recovered from a desert condition, after the ravages of the Saracens."[2] The number of mediæval abbeys built in this kind of country, which the modern investor would have turned from in disgust, was extraordinarily large. When we add to these physical disadvantages the fact that these lonesome wastes were, as Tacitus says, "consecrated by the old terror," we are able to form almost an adequate idea of their uninviting character and of the fortitude and unselfishness of

[1] *Monasticism: What Is It?* By Henry J. Feasey, London, 1898. p. 65.

[2] *Views of the State of Europe During the Middle Ages;* New York, 1882, v. 2, p. 548.

ing part of the royal domains was full of lakes and weeds, and brushwood; but the holy man, by dint of great diligence succeeded in draining off the water and clearing the ground."[1] The isolated character of Clairvaux is indicated by the famous Benedictine, Dom Martine, who says: "In order to arrive at Clairvaux, which is in a valley surrounded by mountains and forests, we had to travel nearly two leagues through the woods."[2]

Italy, devastated by one after another of the Barbarian invaders, in like manner owed its restoration to the monks of St. Benedict and St. Columbanus. In the old monastic charters of Italy, there are indicated the locations of many forests which centuries ago disappeared under the civilizing efforts of the monks. Monte Cassino was an all but impenetrable solitude when the Patriarch of the West retired there in the first years of the sixth century. Subiaco, Farfense, Vulturno, Bobbio, Pomposa and Nonantula were all constructed in wildernesses. But they did not long remain so after the Benedictine communities began to grow and address themselves to the task of converting forests and rock-ribbed mountain land into rich pastures and fields of waving grain. In Spain, the Benedic-

[1] *Hist. du Diocèse de Troyes,* Desquerrois, p. 204.
[2] *Voyage Littéraire de deux Bénédictines,* p. 185.

tines displayed the same constructive industry in their possessions along the banks of the Tagus near Toledo. The abbey of Cîteaux was built in the first years of the twelfth century on marshy, woody and desert land, given by Viscount Raynold, and Odo, Duke of Burgundy.

What has been said of the monastery lands of Germany, France and Italy, is equally true of Belgium, which was the field of reclamation chosen by Vitrucius and his disciples. Here, too, as the result of their tireless labors, arid areas of vast extent, and desolate wastes were cultivated till they produced varied and abundant crops. In like manner, the country lying midway between Belgium and Holland was cleared by the monks, and its inhabitants instructed in the most effective methods of farming.

The whole story of monastic activity in clearing forests, reclaiming swamps and morasses, fertilizing the land, acclimating new crops and improving the old, and thereby advancing the condition of the people, while at the same time increasing the natural wealth of the country, can be told of Flanders as already it has been told so often of the other countries of Europe. Not even the mountainous character of the land and the rigorous climate of Norway and Sweden could deter the monks from carrying to these northern

countries the renewal of agricultural activities and the blessings of civilization.

It was the self-same story in England—unproductive land converted into wealth-producing property of which all succeeding generations were the none-too-grateful beneficiaries. Two thousand square miles of utterly worthless land, or one-half of all Northumberland, was redeemed from sterility and made to produce food crops and pasturage for innumerable flocks and herds. To a like degree in East Anglia, and to a very considerable extent in Mercia, miasmal marshes and fever-spreading swamps were similarly brought under cultivation and made to contribute to the needs of mankind. The first monks of Rievaulk, in Yorkshire, when they settled there in 1131, found that it was indeed "a place of vast and horrible solitude." The monastery at Lancashire was located in a region then known by the quaint but significant title of the "Valley of Deadly Nightshade." Westminster, another monastic site, was referred to as "the horrible place called Thorney," upon which the encroachments of the tide were frequent and far-reaching. Ramsey, also the scene of monastic industry, was swamp land whose more distant parts were accessible only by boats. Medehampstead (now Peterborough), Ely and Southampton were also fields for the ceaseless redeeming labors of the devoted

monks. Croyland, the site of a great and beautiful abbey, as described by William of Malmesbury, was one of several islands in a great marsh one hundred miles long, which stretches from the middle of England to the eastern sea. "The land of Croyland," says Oderic Vitalis, "being marshy and hollow, as the name imports, King Ethelbald, being about to construct a stone church and monastery on the site of the wooden hermitage of St. Guthlac, caused an innumerable quantity of oak piles to be sunk down, and then from a distance of nine miles, from a place called Uppalonde, he had firmer earth carried, and so laid the foundation of the noble monastery, which he loved during all his life, and which from its first foundation to this day, has been constantly inhabited by monks full of religion." [1] "Give these monks," says Gerald du Barri, "a naked moor, or a wild wood, then let a few years pass away, and you will find not only beautiful churches, but dwellings of men built around them."

A swamp was not an inviting place for a husbandman to settle in who had neither capital with which to put a drainage system into his property nor the courage to face its disease-laden vapors, and who, even if he did have them, had not the patience to await the completion of the long and laborious preparation necessary before his profits

[1] *Lib.* 4.

began to materialize. But the monk needed no other stimulus than the inspiration of his consecrated purpose, and no other capital than the sinews of his muscular arms. He could afford to be patient, for the rewards for which he labored were not of this earth. Swamp fevers had no terrors for one who looked forward to death as the beginning of his eternal reward. And so the monk cultivated the swamp and gave it its place in the economy of the agricultural world.

The process by which this result was achieved was as simple in method as it was wonderful in effect. On the edge of the swamp the monks built their monastery in the most primitive manner, furnishing it with the barest necessities of their simple and austere life. And then they set to work, with nothing more elaborate in the way of tools than axe and spade, to cut away the rank growth of underbrush and scrub-trees that encumbered the ground. By means of dikes, dams and ditches constructed with no little engineering skill, they freed the land from water. Then the filling-in process was begun. Large rocks, so big as to necessitate the combined efforts of many of the monks, were dumped into the soggy soil, and the interstices filled in with broken stone. Upon this foundation, fertile soil, laboriously drawn from a considerable distance, was placed

to the depth of several feet. In the end the work, however primitive and slow the method, was finished. In this manner a useless swamp was redeemed and made available for the plow without prejudice to the real or imaginary rights of any one.

Such were the places they chose for their foundations, such the character of the land bestowed upon them by the munificence of kings and nobles. Such were the scenes of their herculean labors and their magnificent contributions to the cause of civilization.

The fact that these religious men once possessed one-fifth of the land of England is not surprising when we consider, as we have done in the preceding pages, the character of the land when it was made over to them. Maitland, the reliable historian of the Middle Ages, and a Protestant minister, bears the following testimony in regard to the matter: "The extraordinary benefit which they (the monks) conferred on society by colonizing waste places—places chosen because they were waste and solitary, and such as could be reclaimed only by the incessant labor of those who were willing to work hard and live hard—lands often given because they were not worth keeping—lands which for a long while left their cultivators half-starved and dependent on the charity of those who admired

what we must too often call a fanatical zeal—even the extraordinary benefit, I say, which they conferred on mankind by thus clearing and cultivating was small in comparison with the advantages derived from them by society, after they had become large proprietors, landlords with more benevolence, and farmers with more intelligence and capital than others."[1]

The result of all this was that a general system of reclamation was carried on by the monks that in the end redeemed the waste places of Europe, from the South to the distant ice-bound regions of the North. In the dismal depths of the forests of Thuringia, amid the solitudes of the Hartz, by the bleak and desolate shores of the Baltic, in the sea and hill country of Scandinavia, by the banks of the Weser and the Elb, these devoted men unceasingly labored, all unknown save to God; and they smoothed the rough and forbidding places of nature for those who today gather the fruits of their labors without a thought for them, or a prayer.

[1] *The Dark Ages*, p. 431.

CHAPTER V

OTHER MONASTIC INDUSTRIES

BUT the reclamation of the land, its improvement and cultivation were not the only forms of manual labor practiced by these zealous servants of God. Such employment was possible only to those of strong constitutions and robust health, and all were not so generously endowed. And yet, manual labor was enjoined by the Rule of St. Benedict on all its followers, whatever their physical strength, mental equipment, or position in the monastery. Hence those not equal to the more arduous tasks of the community were assigned work commensurate with their strength and their talents. Kingsley sketches the varied activities that followed the coming of the monks when he tells us that the building of an abbey in the Middle Ages meant "clearing the backwoods for a Christian settlement by an industrial colony in which every man was expected to spend his life in doing good —all and every good which he could for his fel-

lowmen. Whatever talent he had he threw into the common stock; and worked, as he was found fit to work, at farming, gardening, carpentering, writing, doctoring, teaching in the schools or preaching to the heathen round. In their common church they met to worship God; but also to ask for grace and strength to do their work, as Christianizers and civilizers of mankind. What civilization they knew (and they knew more than we are apt to believe) they taught it freely, and, therefore they were loved, and looked up to as superior beings."[1]

In such high esteem was manual labor held in the monasteries that the Tironenses, or as they were more often called, the monks of the elder St. Bernard, were obliged by their rule to perfect themselves in one or other of the trades that were then practiced. Since the animating motive of these devoted men was in all things no mere lust of personal gain, nor even corporate aggrandizement, but a spiritual purpose that consecrated all their labors to God, it can be readily understood how, placing all their works upon the altar of religion, they became the most wonderful wood-workers, iron-workers, gold- and silver-smiths, masons, and other kinds of craftsmen the world has ever seen. Even the things of a merely useful

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 232.

nature they made, were characterized not only by thoroughness of workmanship, but, whenever possible, by artistic excellence. Many articles which they designed and wrought solely for utilitarian purposes are today objects of universal admiration as they repose on the shelves and in the show-cases of our modern art museums. And so thoroughly did they communicate their spirit and their skill to the youth of the surrounding country that as early as the ninth century we find those whose ancestors but two centuries before were Barbarians in a world of horror and chaos, creating a realm of art and uprearing churches and monasteries that are the admiration and the wonder of modern times.

During the existence of Furness Abbey, situated on the waters of Morecombe Bay in Lancashire, the iron deposits of the neighborhood were extensively worked by the monks. In connection with this industry, and for the purpose of smelting, they set up two furnaces on Walney Island, near the modern Barrow-in-Furness. The third process in iron manufacture, forging, was carried on by the English monks at Flaxley Abbey, in Glostershire.

In weaving and spinning, the monks were especially proficient. Indeed, the manufacture of woolens was introduced into England about 1330 by the monks of Bath; and so skillful did they

become at their looms that Bath became famous as the greatest spinning and knitting city in the west of England. In 1495 the monks of Canterbury themselves wove a magnificent tapestry for the choir of their cathedral. Acknowledgment of their versatility, skill and industry has come down to us from a source which certainly cannot be suspected of partiality. At the time of the suppression of the monasteries in England, the Viceregent's Commissioner reported of the monastery of Wolstrope, Lincolnshire: "Not one religious person there but that he can, and doeth use either imbothering, writing bokis with very fair hand, making their own garments, carving, painting, or graving, etc." The Cistercian monks traded in wool and shipped the manufactured product as far as the Netherlands. They were also the owners of large mills to which many of the towns of England owed their prominence and prosperity.

Throughout the eleventh century a large number of monks applied themselves to the study of mechanics both as students and as engineers. Architects, carvers in wood, metal workers and gold- and silver-smiths were to be found in numbers in all the larger monasteries of this period. And, of course, workers in the humbler arts, such as carpenters, shoemakers, tanners and tailors

were always found in sufficient number to meet all the needs of the community.

But this was not to be the entire sum of their services toward the social reconstruction of Europe. Not only did the monks themselves work with untiring energy at many useful trades, but they also taught them to the people of the neighborhood; for none better than they realized the importance of a diversity of occupations, if their scheme for bettering the social conditions of the times was to be effective. As an example of the industry practiced in the monasteries—wherein indolence and the wasting of time were looked upon not merely as occasions of sin, but sin itself —we have but to cite the case of the Irish monk and bishop, Dega, who spent his nights in copying manuscripts and his days in reading and working in iron and copper. He is credited with having copied the four Gospels three hundred times, and having made three hundred bells and as many croziers for bishops and abbots.

Throughout the entire course of that wonderful thousand years, from the sixth to the sixteenth century, the monks loom large on the pages of history as the promoters of everything tending to the advancement of civilization. Over and above all the other trades and arts which they practiced and taught for the social betterment of the people,

they stand forth in the records of human progress as road-makers, who opened up the highways of national commerce and prosperity; as bridge-builders, like the Pontifices, a religious order founded for the construction and maintenance of bridges, abutments and adjacent roads; as light-house builders, like the Abbot of Aberbrothock.

Nor were these works of public improvement the crude works which we moderns in our conceit might be led to imagine. In the twelfth century a monk of the abbey of Einsiedeln, threw a bridge across the Sylle, so daring in its conception and so scientific in its execution, that it was universally known as Devil's Bridge. John of Ireton, prior of the monastery of Burton, devoted the entire estate of his deceased parents to the building of the Egenton bridge across the Done. In the reign of Edward the Confessor, a monk of the monastery of Durham, built, at considerable expense to the abbey, a magnificent road of wood and sand through the middle of the great forest and swamp of Deeping, and as far as Spalding. This road was called after its builder Elricherode by the English farmers, for whose benefit it was built and who ever held his name in benediction.

In fact, the public-spiritedness of the monks was so unfailing, and their benefactions so numerous, that in time their beneficiaries came to look

upon these public improvements as matters of obligation on the part of the monks. The following incident may be cited in evidence of this strange attitude. It seems that the Abbot of Croyland had been long accustomed to keep in a state of repair the banks of the Fens to prevent the inundation of the surrounding country. On a certain occasion in the reign of Henry VI, a combination of winds and floods succeeded in destroying them, and the entire parish of Wapplode was inundated. Some of the officials of the town, thinking that the destruction was due to the abbot's neglect of an obligation incumbent on him, cited him before the king's court. The charge was, of course, dismissed on the ground that "although the abbots had been in the habit of repairing and making embankments solely through charity, for the safety of the country and the benefit of the king's land," they were under no legal obligation to do so.

CHAPTER VI

INFLUENCE OF MONASTIC LABOR ON THE PEOPLE

BUT of even greater importance than these mighty achievements was the example of manual labor, and especially agricultural labor, they gave to the effete Romans and the indolent Barbarians. By the force of their inspiring example, the monks upheld and effectively taught throughout the length and breadth of Europe the much-needed lesson of the dignity and worth of the labor of the fields. Like the priest of whom Chaucer speaks in the prologue of his Canterbury Tales:

> "This noble ensample unto his sheep he gaf
> That first he wrought, and after that he taughte."

It is quite impossible to appreciate the meaning and the worth of this contribution of the monks to civilization without knowing something of the industrial system which Rome, as Republic and Empire, had fastened on society. In the last century of the Republic manual labor fell into utter

disrepute. It used to be said at Rome that war and agriculture were the only occupations worthy of a Roman, but since then even agriculture had been thrown into the discard. All trades, and many of the occupations which now come under the head of professions, constituted the employment of slaves, and for that reason were looked upon as degrading. In fact, all labor was considered dishonorable by reason of its association with slavery. "In addition," says Lecky, speaking of slavery, "to its manifest effect in encouraging a tyrannical and ferocious spirit in the masters, it cast a stigma on all labor and at once degraded and impoverished the free poor."[1]

It has been estimated that as high as one-half of the Greco-Roman population served in bonds, and one-half of the remainder, the Roman rabble, either through choice or compulsion, lived in idleness. To these latter, food was gratuitously given once every month or oftener. One-fifth of all indirect taxation was devoted to the maintenance of this idle mob of freemen.[2] Among the million and a half inhabitants of the Eternal City, more than half were slaves. This enormous sup-

[1] *History of European Morals*, by William E. H. Lecky; New York, 1884, v. 1, p. 262.

[2] *The Beginnings of Christianity*, by Rt. Rev. Thomas Shahan; New York, 1903, p. 121.

ply was constantly replenished by the wars the Empire incessantly waged against other nations. From each of these successful enterprises the Roman legions brought back thousands of their recent adversaries reduced to slavery. It not unfrequently happened that after a victory a whole nation passed into slavery *sub hasta* or *sub corona*.[1] As a consequence, it was indeed a poor Roman who did not possess one or more slaves. On the authority of Horace, who was himself a poor man and the son of a slave, we know that ten slaves were as few as a gentleman could afford to own. Incidentally, this was the number which he himself possessed. Among the nobles and aristocrats the number sometimes ran into the thousands. One of these nobles at his death left 4,116 slaves to his heirs. The necessity of keeping this vast multitude of bondsmen constantly employed, resulted in the complete absorption by them of manual labor of every kind. As we have already seen, the idle poor were provided for without any effort on their part. Consequently there was no industrial problem crying for solution, no conflict between capital and labor. There was no necessity, therefore, for a citizen of the Empire to bend his back to manual tasks. So far as the Barbarian was concerned, he left all such occupations to his

[1] *Society in Rome under the Caesars*, by M. R. Inge; p. 163.

women, while he gave himself up to indolence or the pursuit of war. Consequently throughout the long centuries that Roman power dominated the earth, manual labor, which in our own day is justly held in such high esteem, was looked down upon as servile, indeed, as the very badge of a slave.

It is not difficult, therefore, to understand the helplessness of the Roman citizen as he found himself stripped of all his slaves, by their desertion to the Barbarian or by the latter's acts of seizure. Impoverished by the invader, untrained to manual labor, and too proud to stoop to its practice, his lot would, indeed, have been an unhappy one had not a new and saving element been suddenly injected into the turmoil and chaos of that appalling cataclysm.

This element of social salvation was monasticism. Shortly before the invasion of Southern Europe began, the monks had come from the East —from Egypt and Palestine; and in such rapidly increasing numbers did they come that before the end of the fifth century they were in every province of the Empire. For the most part they were followers of Pachomius, and of the cenobitical school of monasticism. As such they were well versed in the skilled employments of shop and field; for it must be remembered that as early as

the first half of the fourth century the monasteries following the rule of St. Pachomius taught and practiced all the trades then generally known, and many others the principles of which were known only to the monks. So that for a hundred and fifty years before St. Benedict appeared on the scene, and for over two centuries before the grand debacle resulting from the Barbarian invasions had taken place, amidst all the confusion, turmoil, and slaughter of those calamitous times, the monks of Pachomius pursued the peaceful paths of industry. In this turbulent period and amid these appalling circumstances, manual labor received its consecration at the hands of monasticism.

But the monks of Pachomius, holy and industrious as they were, and great as was the work they wrought under the most adverse circumstances, were not the mighty instrument that God had chosen for the regeneration of society through the rehabilitation of labor. They possessed neither the numbers, growth, nor the unifying spirit necessary to qualify for this exalted mission. This great work, in the designs of Providence, had been reserved for another and a greater institute.

And so when the tidal wave of Barbarism had reached its crest, there came into existence a new

monastic institute, the glorious Order of St. Benedict. More than any other single agency of the Church, the Benedictines were destined to bring about the civilization of the invaders through the diffusion of religion and the propagation of the industrial arts. Founded primarily for the purpose of allowing choice spirits to rise to intimate union with God upon the wings of divine love, they made labor subservient to that end. In fact the Benedictine Rule maintained a perfect balance between devotion and labor. Throughout the greater part of Europe it gave mankind the first example of manual labor performed by others than slaves. The result was that labor received a new consecration on the altars of monasticism. Lecky, the English historian, the temper of whose criticism on things Catholic is quite notorious, grudgingly witnesses to the truth of this statement in the following words: "The services of the Benedictine monks, in destroying by their example the stigma which slavery had attached to labor were very great."[1] He might have truthfully added that it was this enlightened example of the monks that made labor one of the corner-stones of our modern civilization.

St. Benedict, even as Pachomius, Hilarion and

[1] *History of European Morals*, by William E. H. Lecky; New York, 1884, v. 2, p. 93.

Basil before him, made manual labor one of the obligatory occupations of his followers, from which no one was to be exempted. Priest and brother, former prince and erstwhile slave, scholar and unskilled laborer were alike subjected to its pursuit. Some of the greatest personages in the history of the Church were most industrious in this form of employment. Today they might be seen penning a solicited letter to the Sovereign Pontiff on the polities of the Church in regard to some matter of momentous importance; tomorrow, following the plow on the abbey domain: today controverting a Berengarius or an Abelard with exquisite subtlety, vast erudition and inspired eloquence; tomorrow, cutting hay in the meadows of the monastery. Such were St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, St. Thomas à Becket, St. Anselm and Lanfranc, the last three of whom were subsequently Archbishops of Canterbury. These distinguished churchmen worked in the harvest fields and in the monastery barns as industriously as the most unlearned member of the community, earning their daily bread under the sweat of their brow.

When the Abbot of St. Oequitius was sought in haste by a papal messenger anxious to consult him on some important ecclesiastical matter, he found him in the meadow of the abbey engaged

in the work of cutting hay. William of Jumièges gives us this description of the agricultural labors of the monks who founded the famous monastery of Bec: "You would have seen them after the office of the Church, going into the fields to spend the day in agricultural labors, the abbot carrying the seeds on his head and holding tools in his hand; some clearing the ground, others carrying the fertilizer on their heads and spreading it on the ground, no one eating his bread in idleness." The Rule constantly kept before them the words of St. Paul: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat."[1] Aristocrats and men of leisure who in the world had never stooped to the smallest task requiring physical effort, toiled laboriously side by side with those whom, outside those gray stone walls, they had scorned as members of the rabble. The former prince, the erstwhile nobleman, who from childhood had been trained to look upon manual labor with disgust and aversion, now became the eager pupils of their former slaves in learning the most difficult trades and performing the most arduous tasks. In this blessed association of a common toil they learned that higher lesson of the monastic life—the absolute social equality of all, and the equality of spiritual oppor-

[1] 2 Thess. iii., 10.

tunity of all the brethren before God. This was the great principle of Christian democracy introduced into a world that had recognized but two lines of social cleavage—Roman and Barbarian, rich and rabble.

And what a magnificent example was that given to the world by monasticism! Even before the advent of St. Benedict, the great Irish monk and apostle Columbanus bound those among his followers who were reared in luxury, as well as the humblest representatives of the poor, to agricultural labors. And these arduous and unending activities he himself directed as side by side he toiled with them in the fields. And their efforts were clothed in the sacred silence of the cloister, for they never forget their religious character, a silence broken only when they joined in the recitation of a psalm or lifted their souls to heaven on the notes of a joyous "alleluia." These devoted men, many of whom never saw a plow till after they had consecrated themselves to religion, walked with calloused hands and weary feet in the endless furrows with as much patience and perseverance as though it were—as indeed, in a certain sense, it was—the King's highway to the gates of heaven. The city-reared men of the community, with the perspiration running down their cheeks, toiled in the harvest fields to the limit of

physical endurance, and sometimes beyond it, as they often dropped in their tracks from sheer exhaustion. It was written in the Rule of this great Irish apostle of France that it must be the aim of the monk to retire to his couch at night so tired that he might fall asleep by the way, and to arise before he had slept sufficiently.

So, too, was it with the monks of St. David, in Wales. Not only was it incumbent on them to discharge all the ordinary work of agriculture, but they had even to share with the beasts of burden their allotted tasks. The Rule of St. David commanded that when the necessity arose they yoke themselves to the plow and draw it without the aid of oxen.

The sight of several thousand monks cultivating the soil and producing by their peaceful, if laborious, efforts the necessaries of life, was bound to break down the prejudices of the Barbarian, accustomed as he was to hold agriculture in contempt, especially as he saw the opportunities for invasion and plunder constantly diminishing. The peasants eagerly grasped the opportunity to learn from monastic instructors the art of cultivating and improving the soil. Witnessing the results of the methods employed by the monastic farmers, they were easily converted to their use. Even the brigands who threatened them on their arrival

were often won over to the peaceful pursuits of agriculture. All of this was more or less to be expected. But what could hardly have been foreseen was the extraordinary effect of the monks' example on the nobility. The baron began to look to his fields for treasures less dangerously procured than by force of arms. Such treasures he would not have to disgorge upon his deathbed while sacramental absolution waited on promised restitution.

Such were the tireless laborers of the Lord upon whom the unscrupulous scribblers of modern times have tried to fasten the stigma of laziness. It was this ceaseless tilling of the soil that laid the foundation of the subsequent prosperity and wealth of more than half of modern Europe. It is difficult to believe that these purveyors of untruth are actuated by any other than a spirit of unreasonable hostility when we read the words of a Protestant historian like Hallam telling us that "We owe the agricultural restoration of a great part of Europe to the monks."[1] But indifferent alike to the praise and calumny of future centuries they worked humbly and untiringly with undimmed vision for the honor and glory of God and the benefit of their fellow-men.

[1] *Middle Ages*, v. 3, p. 436.

CHAPTER VII

MONASTERIES THE GERM OF MUNICIPAL LIFE

NUMEROUS and great as were the benefits conferred by monasticism on the agricultural life of the people, they were not their only contributions to civilization. The monks were not ignorant of the fact that while the cultivation of the earth was absolutely necessary for the very existence of a people, as well as productive of some of the cruder comforts of life; yet for the greater conveniences of society, for the culture and refinement of civilization, urban life was no less necessary. Cardinal Newman has said, "Cities are indeed the homes of civilization"[1]—and to the building of cities the monks gave their customary practical and enlightened consideration.

Once the monks settled in a place, the building of their municipalities was largely a matter of

[1] *Historical Sketches*, by John Henry Cardinal Newman; London, 1899, v. 3, p. 112.

logical development: the needs of the religious, and the benefits to be derived from association with them, induced large numbers of the Barbarians to discontinue their nomadic life and settle around the walls of the monastery. These, in their turn, created a need for artificers, store keepers and laborers, all of whom through the patronage of the neighborhood, and especially of the monks, were able to earn a decent living for themselves and their families. Here was the beginning of the towns and cities in the new civilization. In this manner, according to the Saxon Chronicles, Boston, St. Botolph's Town, the capital of the Fens, came into existence. It was originally a desert piece of ground given to St. Botolph by Ethelmund, King of the South Angles, as a site for a monastery. The monastery built, the people gathered around and the settlement grew, till finally it assumed the proportions of a town, then of a city. St. Edmundsbury and many other towns and cities in England came into existence in a similar manner.

As an example of what the monks did for the cause of civilization in the matter of founding and regulating cities and towns, we subjoin a list of some of the municipalities of Europe that owe their beginnings and, for a time at least, their government, to the monks. The list—only a par-

tial one—is taken mostly from Montalembert's "Monks of the West." It will be seen to contain the names of many cities of Belgium and France with which the recent world-war familiarized the reading public.

In Germany: Fulda, Fritzlar, Wissemburg, St. Goar, Werden, Hoxter, Gandersheim, Quedlinburg, Nordhausen, Lindau, Kempten, Munster. In France: St. Brieuc, St. Malo, St. Leonard, St. Yrieix, St. Junien, St. Calais, St. Maixent, St. Servan, St. Valery, St. Riquier, St. Omer, St. Pol, St. Amand, St. Quentin, St. Vernant, Bergues, St. Vinox, St. Germain, St. Pourcain, St. Pardoux, St. Die, St. Avold, St. Sever. All these cities and towns bear the names of those who were at once saints and monks. Other cities in France founded, and for many years governed, by the monks are the following: Gueret, Pamiers, Perpignan, Aurillac, Lucon, Tulle, St. Pons, St. Papoul, St. Girons, St. Lizier, Lescar, St. Denis, Redon, La Reole, Nantua, Sarlat, Abbeville, Domfront, Altkirch, Remiremont, Uzerches, Brives, St. Jean d'Angely, Gaillac, Mauriac, Brioude and St. Amand en Berry. These, and many others in France that might be named, took their rise around the gray stone walls of the monasteries under the auspices and direction of the monks. In Switzerland: Schaffhausen, Soleure, St. Maur-

ice, Appenzell, St. Gall, Seckingen, Glaris, Lausanne, Lucerne and Zurich. In Belgium: Ghent, Bruges, Mons, Maubeuge, Niville, Stavelot, Malmedy, Malines, Dunkirk, St. Trond, Soignies, Ninove, Renaix and Liège. In England: Southampton, Peterborough, Colchester, Oxford, Ely, Westminster, Bath, Reading, Dorchester, Whitly, Beverly, Ripon, Boston, Hexham, Evesham, St. Edmundsbury, St. Ives, St. Albans, Bodmin and St. Neots.

Different districts of Paris, such as St. Genevieve, and St. Germain l'Auxerrois, were largely built at the expense of the abbeys whose names they bear. Chaise-Dieu and Abbeville are also suggestive of their monastic founders. The town of St. Saviour, near Monte Cassino in Italy, and a number of the neighboring villages were founded by the monks of St. Benedict. Among these were the towns of Janula, St. Angelo, Terruculus, Cervarius and Vandra. These were built by Abbot Aligernus, who also surrounded them with walls. He erected several detached towers and castles for the defence of the surrounding country. These and many other European cities owe their origin to the intelligence, industry and benevolence of the monks, which attracted the people in great numbers to their neighborhood. Indeed, there are relatively few cities in

the older haunts of European civilization that were not founded, governed, protected, enriched, or in some other way made the beneficiaries of the monastic institutes.

All this they did quietly, without ostentation or parade. "There was no one," says Cardinal Newman, "that contended or cried out, or drew attention to what was going on, but by degrees the woody swamp became a hermitage, a religious house, a farm, an abbey, a village, a seminary, a school of learning, and a city. Roads and villages connected it with other cities which had similarly grown up, and what the haughty Alaric and the fierce Attila had broken to pieces these patient, meditative men have brought together and made to live again."[1] And, indeed, it was in this quiet and unobtrusive way that monasticism upreared all its magnificent monuments of civilization, with no other object in view than the glory of God and the service of mankind.

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[1] *Historical Sketches*, v. 3; *The Mission of St. Benedict*, pp. 410-411.

CHAPTER VIII

MONASTICISM AND EDUCATION

AS the result of the breaking up of the Roman Empire, education, no less than the other institutions of civilization, was threatened with utter extinction at the hands of the Barbarians. Absolutely illiterate themselves, depending entirely on brute strength and strategy of arms for the attainment of their purposes, the appreciation of letters was a thing quite beyond their grasp. Consequently, it seemed as though not only the accumulated knowledge of a thousand years of Greek and Roman culture was about to perish in its entirety, like the knowledge of Babylonia and Phoenicia, but that the progress of education itself was about to be indefinitely interrupted and the world plunged into a hopeless night of intellectual darkness. And so, indeed, it would have been except for the monks of the Catholic Church, who salvaged much of the ancient learning from the universal wreck and ruin that followed in the wake of the invading Barbarians.

To the magnificent efforts of the monks in behalf of education Canon Farrar, the Protestant divine, bears cheerful witness in the following words: "Consider what the Church did for education. Her ten thousand monasteries kept alive and transmitted that torch of learning that otherwise would have been extinguished long since. A religious education, incomparably superior to the mere athleticism of the noble's hall, was extended to the meanest serf who wished it. This fact alone by proclaiming the dignity of the individual elevated the entire hopes and destiny of the race."[1]

It has been the custom of the apologists of the so-called Reformation to endeavor to discredit not only the moral and dogmatic teachings of the Church, but each and every one of her institutions as well. To this end they have invented and circulated such phrases as "the lazy monks," "the ignorant monks," etc. It is conceivable that they hoped by these vicious and persistent calumnies to build up against Catholic monasticism an impenetrable rampart of prejudice and falsehood that would withstand the assaults of all disinterested searchers after truth and justice. But though they built thick and high the Chinese Wall of calumny and hate, for more than three-quarters

[1]Hulsean Lectures, 1870; *Christianity and Race*, p. 286.

of a century it has been crumbling under the dissolving power of truth. And none, at least in many instances, have been more generous in their repudiation of, and reparation for, this bigotry and misrepresentation than the spiritual children of Luther, Calvin, and Henry VIII. Now that the records are spread before the world, so that even he who runs may read, they are quite willing to admit that the monks as a class were neither lazy nor ignorant.

From the very first time that organized asceticism took to itself a home in the Orient it concerned itself most earnestly with the education of its followers. It would seem that all unconsciously it was preparing itself for the tremendous part it was to play in the restoration of civilization by the replacing of the schools of Rome in the midst of the Barbarian debacle. Accordingly, we find Pachomius, the first of monastic patriarchs of the cenobitical school, embodying in his Rule the necessity of education for all his followers. "Every monastic rule . . . either authorized indirectly or commanded directly the study of literature. The earliest of all rules, those of Pachomius, required specifically that every monk should read and write, and provided for the instruction of

those admitted who could not."[1] These are the words of the Rule referred to: "He who will renounce the world . . . must remain a few days outside the gate, and shall be taught the Lord's Prayer, and as many psalms as he can learn." And, again: "There shall be nobody whatever (*omnino nullus*) in the monastery who will not learn to read, and get by heart some part of the Scriptures; at least (*quod minimum est*) the New Testament and the Psalter." And it is to be borne in mind that Pachomius lived and wrote before the middle of the fourth century.

So, too, was it with the Benedictines. From the very beginning St. Benedict urged the importance of systematic reading, to the end that his followers might avail themselves of the sources of inspiration contained in the Scriptures and other religious writings. "During Lent," thus runs the Rule, "let them (the monks) apply themselves to reading from morning until the end of the third hour, and then, until the end of the tenth, labor at whatever is enjoined of them. And in these days of Lent let each one receive a book from the Library and read it all through in order. . . . On Sunday, let all occupy themselves in reading except those who have been appointed to

[1] *A Text-Book in the History of Education*, by Paul Monroe; New York, 1916, p. 256.

the various offices. But if any one should be so negligent or slothful as to be either unwilling or unable to study or to read, let some task be given him to do, that he be not idle."[1] But in order that even the illiterate might enjoy the educational advantage that comes from systematic reading, the Benedictine Rule, thirty-seventh chapter, expressly required, as Maitland testifies, that "there should be reading at all their meals, and directed that the reader's voice and his only should be heard on such occasions." As the Rule was amplified from time to time, the additions almost invariably called attention to the importance of education.

One of the earliest, as well as one of the most famous, of the monastic schools, was that of the monastery of Lérins, of which mention has been made before. This school of learning and of sanctity, established by St. Honoratus at the beginning of the fourth century, was hardly less famous than the schools of Marmoûtier and Tours. Nor was Ireland second to any of the continental nations, nor to England, in its contributions to education at this early date. "For the Celt, it cannot be denied," says Cardinal Newman, "preceded the Anglo-Saxon, not only in his

[1] *The Dark Ages*, by Rev. S. R. Maitland; London, 1844, p. 343.

Christianity, but in his cultivation and custody of learning, religious and secular, and again in his special zeal for its propagation.'"[1] In the sixth and seventh centuries the Irish cloistral schools were without doubt the most celebrated in all the West. Ireland excelled all other western countries in the volume and importance of its scholarship. One of the most important of St. Patrick's missionary acts was the foundation about the year 455, of the school of Armagh. So great was the number of English students attracted to this school that the division of the city in which they lived was known as the Saxon Third. Another famous Irish school of this period was that of Clonard, founded in 520 by St. Finnian. No less than three thousand students are said to have frequented this celebrated school in the time of its founder. A contemporary institution of learning was the Irish school of Bangor, founded by St. Comgall, which could boast among many other illustrious students St. Columbanus and his famous disciple, St. Gall. The school of Clonmacnoise ranked second to none in Ireland, nor in all Europe for that matter. This famous school, founded in 544 by St. Ciaran, was destined, some two hundred years later, to give to the world Al-

[1] *Historical Sketches,* by John Henry Cardinal Newman; London, 1889, v. 3, p. 124.

cuin, the foremost scholar of the world of that period.

Of great renown also was the school of Seville in Spain which produced that colossus of erudition, St. Isidore. Of this school Mariana says: "As if from a citadel of wisdom, many came forth illustrious both for probity of manners and for learning."[1]

But it was not till the coming of the great Irish apostle St. Columbanus, and the greater St. Benedict, that the monks began to loom large on the horizon of the educational world, and education began to assume the character of a scientific system. The Palatine Academy, established by that great son of St. Benedict, St. Gregory, rivaled the schools of classic Rome in purity of Latin and in the teaching of the Liberal Arts.

One of the first and most illustrious disciples of St. Benedict, and his contemporary, was Cassiodorus, who served in the ministry of no less than four of the Gothic kings. As a monk he spent his life in the monastery, apart from his religious duties, in writing commentaries, text-books, educational dissertations for the benefit of his brethren in the monastery of Viviers, which he himself had founded. About 538 he formally

[1]Lib. 6, *Rev. Hispan,* cap. 7.

inaugurated the educational mission of the Benedictines by formulating a plan of studies which included the teaching of the Liberal Arts. The study of the classics he also recommended to his brethren. He himself was profoundly versed in Greek literature, of which he possessed a very considerable library.

The educational work of the Benedictine Order began with the custom of taking into the monasteries little boys called "oblates." For the education of these children, who were destined one day to be monks, it was necessary to establish monastic schools. After some time externs, not intended for the religious life, were admitted to these schools. Their numbers increased from time to time until at length the externs outnumbered the candidates for the monastic life. As a result of this, it became necessary eventually to maintain two distinct schools, one within the cloister for the oblates, and another outside for the externs. In these monastic schools there was no distinction of persons. Future Benedictines, the children of the peasants and the hopeful scions of noble families, layman and cleric, were alike provided with the opportunity of acquiring an education. Neither did royal families disdain to avail themselves of the educational advantages afforded by the monasteries. Many sons of kings

were educated with the children of the poor in the schools of the Benedictines. Such were Lothaire, son of Charles the Bald, educated at the Abbey of St. Germain l'Auxerrois; Theodoric III, educated at Kala, and Pepin, father of Charlemagne. Many of these schools acquired a European reputation and several developed into universities. As there was at least one such school attached to every monastery, and the number of monasteries ran into the thousands, it can be readily seen that the monastic system of education was of a far-reaching character and its influence necessarily a very considerable one.

The sixth century had not come to a close when, as the result of the labors of such scholars as Martianus Capella, Boethius and Cassiodorus, the monastic system of education had become standardized throughout Europe. Studies were divided into two branches—the Trivium and the Quadrivium. In a way this division corresponds to our modern division of arts course and science course. The Trivium comprised grammar (literature), rhetoric (history) and logic. The Quadrivium embraced arithmetic, music, geometry (geography) and astronomy (physics). The purpose and importance of these studies in the minds of the educators of those days can best be understood from the following words of Hugh

of St. Victor: "Among all the departments of knowledge, the ancients assigned seven to be studied by beginners, because they found in them a higher value than in others, so that whosoever has mastered them can afterwards master the rest, rather by research and practice than by the teacher's oral instruction. They are, as it were, the best tools through which the fittest entrance to philosophic truth is opened to our intellect. Hence the name Trivium and Quadrivium, because here the robust mind progresses as if it were upon roads or paths to the secrets of wisdom."

Writers who have consistently endeavored to disparage the influence of the monks in the field of education, seek to convey the impression that the only use these men could find for the classics was to scrape them from their parchments and replace them with some pious tale of little or no historic or literary value. That this happened in some few and isolated instances is undoubtedly true; but that it was anything like a widespread practice or a long-continued one, is absolutely absurd. As a matter of fact, all the classics that survived the invasion of the Barbarians have been transmitted to us through the medium of the monks—a fact hardly consistent with their reputed hostility to classic literature. Indeed, they were among the most ardent admirers of the clas-

sic writers. St. Anselm, for instance, enjoined upon a friend that he should read Virgil and other classic authors, except such of their writings as were immoral. The books of the same author were constantly under the pillow of St. Hugo, Abbot of Cluny. On the shelves of Alcuin's library at York reposed the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Pliny, Virgil and Lucan. Abbot Didier, afterwards successor to Gregory VII, as Pope, had copies made of the works of Horace, Seneca, Cicero and Ovid, by the monks of Monte Cassino. In 855 Lupus, Abbot of Ferrières, wrote to Pope Benedict III asking that he send him a copy of Quintilian, Terence, and of the *De Oratore* of Cicero. Harnack, whose testimony certainly cannot be suspected of partiality to the monks, says: "They studied the songs of heathen poets and the writings of historians and philosophers. Monasteries and monastic schools blossomed forth, and each settlement became a centre of religious life as well as of education."[1]

In some of the larger monasteries an even broader range of secular studies was pursued. In the monastery of Condat, to take but a single instance, the noble secular students were educated in all the learning of the time. Here they made

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 56.

a specialty of Greek and Latin literature. In not a few, Hebrew and Arabic were taught. Not only were all these studies at the disposal of the poor, but to remove any possible obstacle from the path of such students the hospitality of the monastery was placed at their disposal.

It will be seen, therefore, that when the educational institutions of the Roman Empire disappeared before the onrushing hordes of Barbarians, the monastic schools had already been established and were holding aloft the torch of knowledge that saved Europe from a rayless night of intellectual darkness. As the centuries rolled on this light grew in power and brilliancy till the thirteenth century, when it gave place to the all-pervading splendor of the medieval universities. Up to that time the monks were always the principal educators and for many of those centuries the only educators.

But between the activities of the first followers of St. Benedict, St. Columba and St. Columbanus, and the coming of the universities, there stretched a period of five hundred years in which the monastic schools attained their greatest glory and exercised their greatest influence. During this period the greatest of these schools in Germany were those attached to the monasteries of Mayence, Fulda, Corby, St. Gall, St. Maximus of

Treves, Reichenau, Strasburg, Hirschau, and Hersfeld. In France were to be found the following: Marmoûtier, Corbie, Fleury, Bec, Tours, Clugni, and St. Denis of Paris. Besides these there were innumerable others less famous which were of solid and abiding worth in furthering the cause of education. It may be said of Germany in general that wherever its apostle, St. Boniface, established a monastery, he also established a school, no less for the benefit of the people generally than for the advantage of those preparing to enter the ecclesiastical state. Towards the end of the ninth century, the majority of these monasteries, both in Great Britain and on the continent, served the people of all the surrounding country in the capacity of primary and secondary schools; and, as we have already seen, food and books were placed at their disposal in order that they might take advantage of the opportunities offered them. In the chaos of transition, the monks not only kept the dignity and power of knowledge before the minds of men, but they jealously safeguarded the treasures of antiquity which they had salvaged from the wreck of civilization, and safely transmitted them to modern times.

During these five centuries Ireland continued to vindicate her claim to the title, "The Land of Saints and Scholars." In addition to the Irish

monastic schools already mentioned, the closing years of the sixth century saw the schools of Clonfert and Glendalough securely established in the esteem of scholars; while the seventh century brought into prominence the schools of Lismore, Cork, and Ross.

The fame of the first-named of these three extended as far as Italy and attracted students from the Continent as well as from England. By the ninth century Armagh could boast seven thousand students; while the school at Iona, founded by the Irish monks of St. Columba, came to be looked on as the chief seat of learning not only in Britain, but in the whole Western world. And from Iona they carried the light of education to all the surrounding islands. "The Hebrides, the Orkneys, the Shetlands, even lonely St. Kilda and distant Iceland itself," says a non-Catholic historian, "were all reached by the adventurous wanderers, who carried everywhere their Irish monasticism, as well as their Irish culture and their Irish manuscripts."[1]

These schools possessed the highest standards of scholarship known to the Middle Ages. In them the Latin classics were always, and the Greek usually, taught. These monks were the first to

[1] *The Evolution of the Monastic Ideal,* by Herbert B. Workman, London, 1913, p. 200.

attempt to adapt the principles of Aristotle and Plato to the service of Christian theology. "In the early years of the ninth century," says Workman, "whoever knew Greek on the Continent, was either an Irish monk, or taught by an Irish monk."[1] It is not without reason, therefore, that the survival of Greek literature in Europe has been ascribed by competent critics to the culture of the Irish monks.

The fame of their learning attracted students from all over the Continent; but it was from England they came in greatest numbers. In his *Ecclesiastical History,* Venerable Bede tells us that in the year 664 "many of the nobles and middle classes of England left their country and passed into Ireland, for the sake of divine reading, or of a more contented life, and some within the monasteries, others going about from cell to cell, delighted in receiving instruction from the masters, all of whom the Irish liberally received, giving them daily food without price, as also books and instruction gratuitously."[2] In the opening years of the eighth century Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherburne, petulantly complains to the Bishop of Lindisfarne, that British students were passing over into Ireland in swarms as numerous as those

[1] *Ibid.*
[2] *Hist. Ang.* Lib. III, cap. 27.

of bees, "as though," he says, "there were not at home in England an abundance of competent schools and masters." And to all these the children of Erin extended a true Irish welcome. Not only did they place their schools at the disposal of these British students, but, as Bede himself testifies, they even provided them with food, clothing, and books from which to study. And for this princely hospitality the beneficiaries thereof have for hundreds of years requited those who were so largely instrumental in lifting them up from ignorance, barbarism and infidelity, with oppression, poverty, and famine. Such is human gratitude!

The monastic scholars of Ireland during this period manifested a breadth of view, possessed an interest and exercised an activity in educational matters that, generally speaking, was not to be found on the continent. And when they did begin to appear there it was because those who had studied at Irish schools brought them there, as well as to the schools of England, Scotland, and Wales.

But the Irish monks did not selfishly enjoy their learning and their schools at home, nor yet content themselves with the diffusion of their accumulated knowledge through the instrumentality of their foreign students. They themselves car-

ried it across the waters and spread it broadcast upon the continent. And so Columbanus, the famous Irish monk, was not only a great Irish missionary but, as usually happened among the Celtic apostles of those days, a great scholar as well. All his life he applied himself to literary studies, and at the age of sixty-eight addressed to a friend an epistle in Adonic verse in which he makes allusion to the classic recollections of earlier years. But it was at Luxeuil that his principal work was done. Here he established what was undoubtedly the best patronized and the most famous school in Christendom during the seventh century. Not only was it frequented by the peasantry and nobility, but even monks came from the monasteries of the surrounding country to profit by its courses. So great was the enthusiasm for education it inspired that fathers came to study with their children, as Montalembert informs us.[1] And in ever increasing numbers the spiritual children of St. Patrick, during the next four hundred years, went into voluntary exile that they might spread the light of knowledge, human and divine.

A century after Charlemagne had labored so earnestly in behalf of education on the continent,

[1] *The Monks of the West,* vol. 1, p. 500.

the great English king—Alfred—championed the same cause in England. And here, as across the Channel, the monks wrote a magnificent chapter in the history of early medieval education. In the closing years of the sixth century St. Augustine, a Benedictine monk, arrived in England as the accredited ambassador of Pope Gregory the Great, to win the English people to Christ and His Church. The importance of education as a medium of religious propaganda was fully appreciated by this learned monk and his companions, and none labored more zealously than they to spread its blessings among the people. To Augustine himself must be accorded the credit of having introduced the study of the classics into the schools of England.

About the same time St. Dubric, one of the greatest of Welsh bishops, established two famous schools on the banks of the Wye. One of these, situated at Hentland, is said to have been attended by two thousand students. Another famous English monastic school was that of Bangor on the Dee. We have it on the excellent testimony of Bede that this institution comprised seven colleges or houses, each containing three hundred students.

In 668 the Holy See despatched the Greek monk Theodore to England to take possession

of the See of Canterbury. One of the first tasks to which the new archbishop addressed himself was the extension of the educational work of his predecessor, St. Augustine. He and his colleagues were men of great knowledge and rare intelligence, and their efforts were attended by marked success. To assist him in his educational work, Pope Vitalian assigned to his jurisdiction the learned and saintly Benedict Biscop, under whose able management the school of Canterbury soon became renowned for its scholars and its students. Among other studies its curriculum embraced Latin, Greek, geometry, music, mechanics, and astronomy. We are informed by Bede that many of their scholars were as familiar with Latin and Greek, as with their native tongue.

After two years at Canterbury, St. Benedict Biscop went to Northumbria where he established the monastery of Wearmouth in 674 and dedicated it to St. Peter. In 682, at Jarrow-on-Tyne, some five miles from Wearmouth, he established the monastery of St. Paul. These two great monasteries St. Benedict governed as one institute. In each institution he established a flourishing school. In all he made five journeys to Rome and other cities to procure books for the libraries of Wearmouth and Jarrow.

While both these monastic schools stood ex-

ceedingly high in the esteem of the educators of those days, Jarrow seems to have taken on the greater glory in the imperishable renown of its famous pupil and teacher—the Venerable Bede. Burke, in his *Abridgement of English History*, has tersely summed up the contribution of this extraordinary man to the cause of education in the following words: "In the thirty-three years of his priesthood, passed in the double monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow, he became the most learned man of his time, the most intellectual person of his age and country. This father of the English learning—when we reflect upon the time in which he lived, the place in which he spent his whole life, within the walls of a monastery, in so remote and wild a country—it is impossible to refuse him the praise of an incredible industry and a generous thirst of knowledge. That a nation which, not fifty years before had but just begun to emerge from a barbarism so perfect that they were unfurnished even with an alphabet, should, in so short a time, have established so flourishing a seminary of learning, and have produced so eminent a teacher, is a circumstance which, I imagine, no other nation besides England can boast."[1] It has well been said of him that

[1] P. 281.

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"in his erudition he grasped all that was then known in the world." His encyclopedic character was what most astonished his contemporaries. He wrote both in prose and verse, in Anglo-Saxon and in Latin. With other saints, he is gratefully remembered by the Anglo-Saxons as among those who at that early date "taught our people in English."[1] This is a reference to the well-known fact that he translated into the vernacular both the Psalter and the four Gospels.

Montalembert gives the following interesting description of the school at Cambridge which eventually developed into the present university of that name: "Four Norman monks, transplanted from St. Evroul, in France, to Croyland, in England, with the eloquent and learned Abbot Joffride, formerly professor at Orleans, concluded to open a public course of lectures in a granary which they hired near the gate of the town of Cambridge. But as neither this granary nor other still larger edifices were able to contain the throng of men and women who soon hastened to listen to them, the monks of Croyland conceived the notion of organizing the instruction given by the professors on the plan of the monastic exercises of the Order. Thus, Brother Odo was deputed to teach grammar, according to Priscian

[1] *The Monastic Life,* by Thomas W. Allies; London, p. 215.

and Remy, at daybreak; at Prime, Brother Terric taught Aristotle's logic, with the comments of Porphyry and Averroes; at Tierce, Brother William, the rhetoric of Cicero and Quintilian; while on every holiday, Brother Gislebert, the most learned member of the community, explained the Sacred Scriptures to the priests and scholars, and, moreover, preached every Sunday to the people, in spite of his unfamiliarity with the English language. Such was the beginning of the University of Cambridge—a feeble rivulet, which soon became, according to the expression of a French monk, Peter of Blois, 'a great stream which fertilized all England.' "[1]

Another monastic school that contributed most effectively to the diffusion of knowledge in those early days when England, through the instrumentality of her monks, labored to dispel the black night of paganism which brooded over the land, was that of Llanelwy, founded by St. Kentigern. Not only was the torch of learning kept brilliantly ablaze at this famous college, but also the missionary spirit was so successfully cultivated that its apostolic alumni were able to carry the Gospel throughout the length and breadth of England, and then beyond the confines of Britain, to Norway, Iceland, and the Orkney Islands.

[1] *Op. cit.*, v. 7, p. 650.

St. Cadoc, whose own education was received from an Irish recluse, Fathai, founded one of the greatest of the monastic schools, that of Llancarvan in Wales, at which the highest as well as the lowliest in the land were educated till the Saxon invasion put an end to its existence. Across the channel at Armorica, his place of exile, he carried on the work of education. So great was his love for the classics that he made his students learn Virgil by heart. In the salvation of the poet's soul he had an unshakable confidence.

The following eulogy in praise of knowledge, attributed to St. Cadoc, is a striking witness of his keen appreciation of the power of learning: "Without knowledge there is no power; without knowledge there is no wisdom; without knowledge there is no liberty; without knowledge there is no beauty; without knowledge there is no nobility; without knowledge there is no victory; without knowledge there is no honor; without knowledge there is no God."

Archbishop Egbert's school at York, one of the most famous in all England, built its reputation for educational efficiency on the system of St. Benedict Biscop. It was at York that Alcuin studied and taught before being called to the continent by Charlemagne. Other well-known schools were conducted by the monks at Ramsey Abbey,

Malmesbury, Glastonbury, Abingdon, St. Albans and Westminster. The famous abbey of Malmesbury was the outgrowth of a school established in 670 by an Irish monk named Mailduf.

These schools, it must be remembered, not only served the purpose of seminaries to educate candidates for the ecclesiastical state, but also as common schools and colleges for the education of laymen; a fact to which Tanner bears witness when he says that "the English monasteries till the moment of their destruction, were schools of learning and education, and that all the neighbors that desired it might have their children taught grammar and church music without any expense to them."[1]

There was perhaps no single person in the first half of the Middle Ages who exercised so profound an influence on the educational activities of his times as did the English monk, Alcuin. Born in 735, his talents even as a youth gave promise of the brilliant academic career which he fully realized as a teacher in the cathedral school of York. In 782, at the request of Charlemagne, he went to the continent and took charge of the Palace School. Among all the scholars Charlemagne gathered around him at this famous school Alcuin was easily the first in academic culture.

[1] *Notitia Monastica*, Preface.

With a splendid enthusiasm he co-operated with his royal patron in diffusing the blessings of education throughout France and Rhenish Germany. Under his direction the multiplication of monastic schools was carried out on an ever-increasing scale. But mere numbers were not the sole object of his effort. He was no less anxious for, and no less successful in obtaining, a marked improvement in the grade of work accomplished in these schools. And in all these educational activities he was no less solicitous for the lay students than for those preparing for the service of the Church. It was no doubt at the suggestion and under the direction of Alcuin that Charlemagne, in 787, issued his famous capitulary concerning schools, which has been called "the foundation of modern education" and "the charter of modern thought." Besides the Palace School, some twenty-seven others were founded, of which those at Tours, Corbie, Bec, Cluny and St. Gall were the most famous. At St. Gall (Switzerland) in the latter part of the tenth century lectures were given on Cicero, Terence, Juvenal, Persius, Ovid, and Sophocles; a fact clearly indicating that the monks were not always opposed to the study of the classics.

In 794 Alcuin withdrew from the court and became abbot of the monastery of Tours. He was

succeeded as rector of the Studium of Paris by Clement, an Irishman of great scholarly distinction. At Tours, amid the more congenial surroundings of religion, Alcuin redoubled his efforts in behalf of education and finally succeeded in making his monastic school the educational centre of all France. From all over Europe students came to place themselves under his instruction, and, imbued with his spirit and possessed of his knowledge, went forth from the school at Tours to spread his educational influence over all the continent. He wrote copiously on grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, arithmetic and on the Seven Liberal Arts. His idea of the importance and purpose of human knowledge may be summed up in these his own words: "Despise not human successes, but make of them a foundation; so teach children grammar and the doctrines of philosophy that ascending the steps of wisdom they may reach the summit, which is evangelical perfection, and while advancing in years they may also increase the treasures of wisdom."

The influence of Alcuin, whom Mabillon considers "the most learned man of his age," radiated from Tours to every nook and corner of France and Germany. The agents of the transmission were the students who came from near and far to sit at his feet and drink in knowledge, wisdom,

and inspiration. The most distinguished of these transmitters of Alcuin's educational influence, was Rabanus Maurus, who was one day to excel his master in depth of intellect, as well as in breadth of learning. It was as Abbot of Fulda that the opportunity was given him to put into practice the pedagogical system with which he had become familiar in the school of Alcuin.

Under the famous monks Lanfranc and St. Anselm, afterwards Archbishops of Canterbury, the monastic school at Bec, in Normandy, also became a great educational centre. The monks of Cluny played a magnificent part as the custodians and propagators of knowledge in France. In the reign of Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne, two schools were maintained in every monastery—one for candidates for the monastic life, and one for the laity and those preparing to become diocesan clergy.

From the eighth to the twelfth century the monastic schools were for the greater part of that time the only shrines of education, and always the most important ones. The coming of the mendicant orders and the rise of the universities lifted the work of education from the shoulders of the Benedictines, where it had been placed by these devoted men in a magnificent spirit of disinterested service. "At a time," says a modern

writer, "when neither local nor national governments had assumed any responsibility in connection with elementary education, and when the municipalities were too ignorant, and in many cases too poor, to make provisions for the education of children, the monks took up the task as a part of the regular routine of their duty. The Rule of St. Benedict had in fact made express provisions for the education of pupils."[1] From all of which the truth of the following words of Monroe, in his history of education, is quite apparent: "Whatever of ancient learning and literature we have preserved to us today is largely owing to the monks. . . . If it had not been for such places of retirement and of protection, it is difficult to see how more than the merest rudiments of the classics would have survived from the seventh to the twelfth century. Through all this long and tumultuous period of Barbarian aggression, when the remnants of classic civilization, along with the fundamentals of social structure, were being transferred to a people no farther advanced in the stage of culture than were the American Indians, the monasteries served as the safety deposit vaults of learning."[2]

[1] *Books and Their Makers During the Middle Ages*, by George Haven Putnam; v. 1, p. 106.

[2] *Text-book. In the History of Education*, by Paul Monroe, New York, 1916, p. 264.

CHAPTER IX

MONASTIC CHRONICLERS

NO small service was that conferred on education by the chroniclers of the monasteries whose faithful tabulation of events, past and present, is the only account we have in many instances of the periods of which they wrote. In the case of England at least, had it not been for the industry and intelligence of these monastic scribes, much would have been irretrievably lost to history. The same is true of one of the most critical periods of French history.

Venerable Bede, of course, overtops all the monastic chroniclers both in the volume and in the scientific character of his work. His greatest effort, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* treats of the period from the Saxon invasions to the year 731, four years after which date he died. It constitutes the only source from which may be drawn an exact account of the re-

conversion of England under the Saxons and the Christian civilization resulting therefrom. An earlier chronicler than Bede was the monk St. Gildas, educated in Ireland and called the Wise, who wrote in the sixth century. So far as is known he was the first English historian. His principal work deals largely with the deplorable condition of England following the departure of the Romans. He wielded a trenchant pen which he did not hesitate to direct, with no little sarcasm, against some of the petty kings of England. Bede and Alcuin held him in such high esteem that he was frequently quoted by them as a writer of authority.

Odericus Vitalis, a chronicler who lived in the last quarter of the eleventh century and the first half of the twelfth, although spending the greater part of his life in France, claimed England for the land of his nativity. He is best known for an ecclesiastical history comprising thirteen books, and embracing the entire Christian era. His *Recent History* deals with the eighteen years immediately preceding his death and is especially valuable as a history of the reign of Stephen and other Norman kings.

French monasticism produced historians no less distinguished than those of its English counterpart. Gregory of Tours (538-593) rests his

claim to fame on his *History of the Franks* in ten books. It is invaluable for the reason that without it we should know little or nothing of the origin of the Frankish monarchy. St. Abbon (945-1004), a monk of Fleury, wrote of the wars of King Eudes, and of Paris during the sieges of the Normans. Frodoard (894-966) has left us a history of the middle half of the tenth century which is characterized by extraordinary exactness. His history of the Church of Rheims is unusually praiseworthy for its completeness and its strict adhesion to facts, virtues none too frequent in historical narratives ancient or modern. Richer (980-1000), a monk of Saint-Remy, wrote a history of France for the period between the years 880 and 995. This was the critical period of France when its sovereignty passed from the Carlovingians to the Capetians.

Among the monastic historians of Germany were Theganus, Eginard and Rodolphus of the famous monastery of Fulda who constituted themselves the chroniclers of the Carlovingian dynasty. The monastery of St. Gall, founded by the Irish apostle of that name, produced a number of distinguished writers who did full justice to its long and interesting history. Ditmar of Magdeburg chose the tenth century for the subject of his story. Lambert of Hersfeld was the author of

the *Annales Lamberti,* a chronicle of the world, ending with the year 1077, the year of the author's death. It is considered one of the finest literary productions of the Middle Ages. At the request of Hermannus Contractus, Berthold of Reichenau continued the former's world chronicle to the year 1054. The *Chronicon Universale* was the work of Ekkehard of Aurach, who lived during the latter half of the eleventh, and the first quarter of the twelfth century. It is the chief source of German history during the period of the author's own life.

Almost the entire medieval history of Italy has in the same way been drawn from the chronicles of monastic historians. Chief among the monasteries contributing these precious chronicles were those of Bobbio, Monte Cassino, Volturna and Novalese. Some of the best known of these chroniclers were John the Deacon, Paul the Deacon, Peter the Deacon, and Leo, Bishop of Ostia.

These and all the other monastic chroniclers looked upon their work in a purely religious light, one that would consecrate their labor and render it pleasing and profitable in the sight of God to whom alone they looked for approval. This in itself was a guarantee of its completeness, accuracy and fairness within the limits of human effort.

They sought no favors from the subjects of their narrative, nor was their treatment of the subject in hand colored by the mercenary hope of increased sales at the hands of the general public. Few of them had any expectation that their work would ever fall under the eyes of other than monastic readers; and none of them received any pecuniary reward as the fruits of his labors. They wrote under the impulse of an ever-present purpose to serve, and the magnitude of that service, only the scholars of today can fully understand and appreciate.

CHAPTER X

MONASTIC COPYISTS

NEITHER was it merely in the class-room, nor in the compiling of chronicles alone that the monks served the ends of education. What the choir was in the religious lives of these holy men, that was the scriptorium in their academic lives. In the multiplication of books and in the collection of libraries they contributed to that great cause; and not only their own day and generation but all succeeding ages were placed under a debt of gratitude to them which has been recognized by all, but paid by few. Poor, indeed, would modern scholarship be in the learning of the ancients were it not for the treasures salvaged by the monks from the ruins of the Roman civilization. Had they done nothing else for civilization than to preserve what remained of ancient and classic literature, it would have merited for them the everlasting gratitude of the world of scholar-

ship. Had it not been for their intelligent and untiring efforts Greek and Latin literature would have disappeared as completely as the literature of Babylonia and Phoenicia. "It is manifest," says Leibnitz, "that both books and letters have been preserved by the aid of the monasteries." The monasteries were the channels through which the glorious achievements of classic antiquity for a thousand years came safely through the turmoil and destruction of centuries of Barbarian invasions to the advantage and enjoyment of modern times. On a question such as this the authority of the author of *Social England* carries the greatest weight. Says Powell: "In early Saxon times the monasteries were the means of preserving to our use all the most precious treasures of literature, art and religion. The monks alone possessed and handed down to us contemporary history, laws, manners, and customs which have had a powerful influence on the social life of today. It was the religious houses that spared the inhabitants of these islands the Sisyphean task of again toiling up the steps of time from a lower stage of moral, intellectual and social culture than they had probably attained at the time of the Roman invasion."[1]

No less a personage than Charles Eliot, Presi-

[1] *Social England,* by T. Yorke Powell.

dent Emeritus of Harvard University, has said: "In her monasteries and great libraries, in her palaces as well as grand churches, the Catholic Church was for centuries the guardian of the treasures of learning of the world. It was through the devotion of priests and lay-brothers and scribes within her monasteries that we owe the treasures of learning of the Renaissance."

But better a thousand times than all this is the fact that to the monks is due, humanly speaking, the preservation of the Bible. Had it not been for their devoted guardianship, their indefatigable industry in multiplying copies of its several parts as of its entirety, it is hardly conceivable that it could have survived the period of the invasions. The same is true of the writings of the Fathers. Thus in the three great departments of Biblical, patristic and classic literature the monks were not only the intelligent conservators for their own times but for other times and other peoples. They transmitted them to the invading nations when the latter had arrived at a stage of civilization that would enable them to profit by the knowledge of Christian and classic literature. This period extended from the death of St. Benedict to the ninth century.

In the preservation of much valuable literature that was neither religious nor antique, but of great

value to scholarship, we are also indebted to the catholic interests of the monks. "The great epics of France and Germany, the Chansons de Geste," says Bishop Shahan, "were saved in the monasteries or with the connivance of monks, to whom the wandering singers were very dear in spite of their satire and free tongues. The Chanson de Roland, the Lied of the Nibelungs, the Lied of Gudrun, the great sagas of Edda of the Northland, owe their preservation and no little of their content, color and form, to the interest of monks and churchmen in the saving of old stories, old fables, and old genealogies, especially after the first period of national conversion had gone by."[1]

The chief instrumentality by which this great work of conservation and transmission was carried on were the monastic copyists. Every monastery had its scriptorium—a room in which certain monks worked at the copying of ancient and modern manuscripts and by this laborious process not only placed them at the disposal of an ever increasing number of readers, but also lessened the danger of their disappearance from the world of books. Of course the art of printing had not then been invented and was not to be for hundreds of years. Consequently, whatever multiplication of books was to be made must be effected through the

[1] *The Middle Ages*, p. 214, New York, 1904.

slow and toilsome efforts of the monastic copyists who reproduced, letter by letter, the original text. And this was often done with fingers numbed by the cold as the scribe burned the night oil over his task. Lewis, a monk of Wessobrunn, in Bavaria, Maitland tells us, in a communication attached to a copy of Jerome's commentary on Daniel, conveys the following information concerning his experience while copying the book. Referring to himself in the third person, he says: "While he wrote he was cold, and what he could not write by the light of the sun, he wrote by the light of lamps."[1] Surely it must have been a great love of learning that prompted men to produce books in this toilsome manner, and sustained them through the long and wearisome period of their production. No other institution than monasticism did, and none other could, produce such a character as the copyist of the Middle Ages. Certainly nothing less than religious discipline could hold him to his disinterested task. Day after day he and his associates toiled in the absolute silence of the scriptorium, multiplying copies of the Gospels, the patristic writings, the antique authors, books of ritual, historical works and the canons. But solemn and reserved as he was, the monk who had been thus employed for months at

[1] *The Dark Ages*, by S. R. Maitland, London, 1844, p. 406.

his arduous task could not but experience a sense of relief at its completion, as we learn from the following words which the copyist wrote on the last page of one of his works: "The book at last complete, the scribe cuts a joyous caper."[1]

From the very beginning of the cenobitical type of monasticism the work of the copyist was held in high esteem by these devoted followers of the higher life. "The Rule of St. Ferreol," observes Montalembert, "written in the sixth century, says that he who does not turn up the earth with the plow ought to write the parchment with his fingers."[2] Its use as an educational adjunct was of even an earlier date in Ireland. The Carthusians held the work of the copyist in the highest esteem, as the following words of Prior Guigo amply attest: "Diligently labor at this work; this ought to be the special work of enclosed Carthusians . . . this work in a certain sense is an immortal work, if one may say it, not passing away, but ever remaining; a work, so to speak, that is not a work; a work which above all others is most proper for educated religious men."[3] Not only the monasteries of St. Benedict, but those that

[1] *Libro completo saltat scriptor pede laeto.*

[2] *The Monks of the West,* v. 6, p. 81.

[3] *Lit de quadripartito Exercitio Cellae,* chap. 36 (ed. Migne, v. 153, col. 883).

had antedated his coming, such as those founded by St. Martin, St. Eugendus, St. Yrieix and St. Columbanus, practiced the invaluable art of the copyist. And in Ireland, which took priority over Europe in so many intellectual activities, the copying of manuscripts was at least contemporaneous with the earliest work of that kind in the continental monasteries, as we learn from the biographies of St. Bridget and St. Columba. It was the illicit copying of a manuscript by the latter, we are told, that led to war between the kinsmen of the saint and King Diermit, and eventually gave to Scotland her apostle. Irish manuscripts, brought to the continent by the scholars and missionaries of Ireland, were to be found in every monastery of any size in Europe.

But the work of the scriptorium, which in time became a part of the religious activity of every monastery, was first organized and placed on a systematic basis by Cassiodorus, the contemporary of St. Benedict. In the monastery of Vivarium, in Calabria, which he himself had established, he organized the work of the scriptorium. A man of general and profound learning himself, he fully appreciated the value and power of knowledge and desired to make it available to the fullest extent to the brethren of his order. Speaking of the copyists Cassiodorus says: "I confess, my

brethren, that of all your physical labors, that of copying books has always been the avocation most to my taste: the more so, as by this exercise of the mind upon the Holy Scriptures, you convey to those who will read what you have written, a kind of oral instruction; you preach with the hand, converting the fingers into organs of speech, announcing silently to men a theme of salvation; it is, as it were, fighting the evil one with pen and ink. For every word written by the antiquary (scribe) the demon receives a severe wound. . . . In his seat, as he copies his books, the recluse travels through many lands without quitting his room, and the work of his hands has its influence in places where he has never been."[1] Cassiodorus realized how suitable were the monastic cloisters, wrapt in silence and free from all distractions, to the purposes of the copyist and illuminator. Accordingly, he encouraged the art of penmanship, and to those who showed proficiency he assigned the work of copying the manuscripts which, for that purpose, had been borrowed from other monasteries, or their own volumes, the copies of which were to be presented to the less prosperous houses, or in acknowledgment of like

[1] *Monasticism: What is it?* By Henry J. Feasey, London, 1898, p. 61.

courtesies received. Thus William, Abbot of Hirschau, wrote and copied a great many volumes which he donated to the needy monasteries. Nor was his selection of authors thus chosen for multiplication restricted to those of a religious character. Greek and Latin pagan authors, of which he possessed not a few, were likewise copied and circulated among other monasteries, which eagerly received them. His example was quickly imitated by other abbots and in a short time the copyist and the scriptorium were fixed institutions of the monastic life. Schlegel tells us that as a result of the industry of these monastic scribes, from the time of Charlemagne manuscripts were multiplied in the West with more profusion than they had even been in the most polished times of antiquity, so that the writings of Greece and Rome were now studied and commented upon in remote and desolate regions, to which, if it had not been for the ecclesiastical society their fame would have never reached.[1]

That the work of the copyist was not intended to be merely a mechanical one, like that of the modern printer, but was designed to have an intellectual and moral effect, is indicated by the following prayer employed in the blessing of a scrip-

[1] *Mores Catholici*, by Kenelm H. Digby, New York, v. 1, p. 543.

torium in the eighth century: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to bless this scriptorium of Thy servants, and all that dwell therein; that whatsoever sacred writings shall be here read or written by them, they may receive with understanding, and profit by the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

In his account of the scriptorium of his monastery and the character of the work done therein, Cassiodorus clearly sets forth the conviction that such work was not to be merely a matter of manual labor, but one into which the soul was to enter no less than the hand: "He may fill his mind with the Scriptures while copying the sayings of the Lord; with his fingers he gives life to men and arms against the wiles of the devil. As the antiquarius copies the words of Christ, so many wounds does he inflict upon Satan. What he writes in his cell will be scattered far and wide over distant provinces. Man multiplies the words of heaven, and, if I may dare so to speak, the three fingers of his right hand are made to express the utterances of the Holy Trinity. The fast travelling reed writes down the holy words and this avenges the malice of the Wicked One who caused a reed to be used to smite the head of the Saviour." But it was not the mind of Cassiodorus

De Institutione Divinarum Litterarum, xxx Letters, 57.

that the religious conception of his work should be carried to the point of excluding from his labors all that was not of a religious character. On the contrary, in the twenty-eighth chapter of this same work he admonishes the copyist not to reject things pertaining to secular literature. How well this injunction was obeyed is evident from the many works of antiquity now reposing, secure for all time, on the shelves of our libraries. Among these classical works that have been rescued from destruction by the tireless labors of the monastic copyists are the following: five books of the Annals of Tacitus, found in the monastic library at Corbie; Lactantius' dissertation on the Death of Persecutors, at Moissac; the Commentaries of Servius on Virgil, at Fleury; The Republic of Cicero, also at Fleury; the Aululария of Plautus, as well as many others scattered through the libraries of Europe. If this had been the entire sum of the monks' service to education it would have entitled them to the gratitude of the world of letters.

As an example of the extent to which the work of the scriptorium was carried on we may cite the case of the monastery of Fulda, where Abbot Sturnius employed four hundred copyists. To build up the library at the monastery of Tours, Alcuin brought a number of copyists from Eng-

land. The monastery of Lindisfarne, in Northumbria, possessed a famous scriptorium which followed the Irish traditions, while that of Canterbury adhered to those of Italy. In the eleventh century when Cluny had come into existence there was considerable rivalry between the black monks and the Cistercians in the matter of making and collecting books. Never was the number of copyists nor the volume of their output greater; a fact to which Hallam bears ample testimony.

In evidence of the watchfulness and care taken by the monks to safeguard the accuracy of the text and the usefulness of their labors, the following words, written by Alcuin to the scribes of his school at Tours, are to the point: "Here let the scribes sit who copy out the words of the Divine Law, and likewise the hallowed sayings of the Holy Fathers. Let them beware of interspersing their own frivolities in the words they copy, nor let a trifler's hand make mistakes through haste. Let them earnestly seek out for themselves correctly written books to transcribe, that the flying pen may speed along the right path. Let them distinguish the proper sense by colons and commas, and let them set the points each one in its due place, and let not him who reads the words to them either read falsely or pause suddenly. It is

a noble work to write out Holy Books, nor shall the scribe fail of his due reward."[1]

In the earlier part of the Middle Ages the scriptorium was a large, well-lighted, but usually unheated, room in which each of the copyists had his desk, his parchment and the volume he was copying. But later on the custom was introduced of assigning a single small room or cell to each of the scribes. Sometimes the copyists would assemble in the large scriptorium, and one of them would read the text which was to be copied, from the parchment of the original. This was the custom when many copies of some work were to be made, in answer to repeated requests from other monasteries.

As we noted before the monks have been accused, from time to time, of destroying valuable manuscripts, especially those of classic antiquity,

[1] *Alcuin and the Rise of the Christian Schools*, by A. F. West, p. 72; New York, 1892.

Hic sedeant sacrae scribentes famina legis,
Nec non sanctorum dicta sacrata patrum.
His interserere caveant sua frivola verbis,
Frivola ne propter erret et ipsa manus,
Correctosque sibi quaerant studiose libellos,
Tramite quo recto penna volantis eat.
Per cola distinguant proprios et commata sensus.
Et punctos ponant ordine quosque suo,
Ne vel falsa legat taceat vel forte repente,
Ante pios fratres lector in ecclesia.
Est decus egregium sacrorum scribere libros,
Nec mercede sua scriptor et ipse caret.

for the purpose of securing parchments on which to write copies of the Scriptures, historical records, pious stories and such like matter. In proof of this charge certain palimpsests have been offered in evidence in various parts of Europe. A palimpsest, it may be observed, is a parchment from which the original record has been erased to make room for another. This charge, like all other sweeping accusations against the monks, is absolutely unfounded. That palimpsests exist, no intelligent person thinks of denying; but that such parchments were ever the carriers of classic literature which was erased from them by the monks, is a thing which no scholar will admit is susceptible of the slightest proof. There is no doubt that the monks are responsible, and legitimately so, for the existence of a great many palimpsests; but the vast majority of these came into existence after the opening of the twelfth century when, owing to the intelligence, industry, and educational ardor of the monks, the works of classic literature that had survived the Barbarian invasions, were secure for all future time. The erasures were from parchments that contained duplicates of works already possessed in the monastery of the monk responsible for the erasure. In some instances, no doubt, the palimpsest originally contained a copy of some work of antiquity; more often the

contents were the religious works above described; but in either event, it is obvious that as long as other copies of the work were extant, there could be no loss to literature. Had the monks been animated by the hostility to classic literature of which they have been accused, not the smallest fragment of such literature would have survived the period of transition from barbarism to civilization; for the monks were the sole conservators and transmitters of the learning of antiquity. If one did not know the spirit animating these critics of the monks, it would be hard to account for their silence in the presence of the wholesale and wanton destruction wrought by the Reformers of the sixteenth century in Germany, Great Britain, and even in some parts of France. Not only were individual manuscripts destroyed, but entire libraries were wiped out in a spirit of envenomed hostility to the Catholic Church.[1]

But even in the Middle Ages the work of multiplying palimpsests by laymen had already begun. Owing to the difficulty of obtaining parchments, and their excessive cost, there was a strong temptation on the part of the less scrupulous among professional men, to resort to the scraping of parchments. Even as late as the four-

[1] Maitland, *The Dark Ages*, pp. 223-281, especially foot-note on p. 281.

teenth centuries, notaries were forbidden to practice till they had taken an oath to write only on new parchments.

The making of a manuscript was in no way limited to the industry of a single monk. Indeed, many besides the actual copyist contributed to the work of its creation. In the first place, they manufactured their own parchments from the skins of wild animals which the servants of the monastery hunted through the mountains and forests of the vicinity. The substitution of parchment for paper was made necessary by changed political conditions in the Orient. Owing to the subjugation of Egypt by the Saracens the importation of papyrus, hitherto in general use for the purposes of writing, was no longer possible. From the seventh century on, all documents, private, and official, were inscribed on parchments. In the preparation of these parchments for the use of the scriptorium the monks attained to a high degree of skill. Before the regular copyist began the actual work of transcribing the text a brother monk must precede him and draw the delicate red lines across the parchment which were to guide the pen of the copyist. The body of the work finished, it must now pass under the scrutinizing gaze of the "corrector," or proof reader, as moderns would call him, whose duty it was to verify the accuracy of

the text. Initials and titles were then supplied in red lettering by the "rubricator," or, as in the more elaborate works, illuminated by the artist of the monastery. These supplementary works were usually done between Matins and Lauds, the daylight being reserved for the actual work of transcription. Erasures were seldom resorted to, and then only when absolutely necessary. In all other instances corrections were made by drawing delicate lines with the pen through the erroneous word so as not to mar the beauty of the copy. Finally, it reached the binders, who enclosed it between wooden covers clamped with ivory or iron.

It is, then, but a most conservative statement of the case that is contained in the following words: "It was in the monasteries that were preserved such fragments of the classic literature as had escaped the general devastation of Italy, and it was to the labors of the monks of the West, and particularly to the labors of the monks of St. Benedict, that was due the preservation for the Middle Ages and for succeeding generations, of the remembrance and the influence of the literature of classic times. For a period of more than six centuries the safety of the literary heritage of Europe, one may say, of the world, depended upon the scribes of a dozen scattered monaster-

ies.'"[1] Thus, while the Barbarian pushed forward the lurid flame of destruction which was to leave in its wake the black night of ignorance, the monk kept alight in his scriptorium the sacred torch of knowledge, till it came forth to fill the world with the splendor of its flame.

"The devotion and application of the monks," says a well-known historian, "produced in the course of years a class of scribes whose work in the transcribing and illuminating of manuscripts far surpassed in perfection and beauty the productions of the copyists of classic Rome. . . . It was these manuscripts of the monks of Cassiodorus and St. Benedict that gave the 'copy' for the first edition of Cicero, Virgil and the other classic writers produced by the earliest printers of Germany and Italy." [2]

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[1] *Books and Their Makers During the Middle Ages*, by George Haven Putnam, New York, v. 1, p. 25.

[2] *Ibid.*

CHAPTER XI

MONASTIC LIBRARIES

NO less important an adjunct to the work of education carried on by the monastic orders was the collecting of libraries. And to this, as to everything else pertaining to the work of restoring civilization, the monks addressed themselves with enlightenment and zeal. The necessity of collecting books to some extent or other sprang from the very letter of the Benedictine Rule, which solemnly enjoined upon all its followers the obligation of public and private reading. As the educational work of the Order expanded in the course of time, the necessity of a greater number and diversity of books became more pressing, until finally a monastic library pertained to the very essence of a religious house. In a letter written by the Sub-prior Geoffry, in 1170, to Peter Mangot, a monk of the diocese of Tours, the writer says: "A monastery without

a library is like a castle without an armory. Thence it is that we bring forth the sentences of the divine law, like sharp arrows, to attack the enemy. Thence we take the armor of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God."[1]

Libraries were intimately associated with monasticism from the days of Pachomius in the fourth century, *i.e.*, from the very beginning of cenobitical monasticism. In his rule he provided that the books of the monastery be kept in a vault built into the wall. No one was permitted to keep a book for his personal use for more than a year. We have already seen what stress the Benedictine Rule lays on individual reading. Each monk chose his own book. As there were hundreds of monks in most of the older monasteries, there must of necessity have been an equal number of books to meet the individual needs of the community. Nor was this library, in the mind of St. Benedict, to be without literary distinction. Accordingly he provided that each one should include "a certain collection of the most illustrious authors."

The sources from which these libraries in-

[1]Quoted by Maitland, *cf. cit.*, p. 200.

creased in numbers were fourfold—authorship, copying, purchase and donation. In almost all the larger monasteries there were men who, like Cassiodorus, Columba, Columbanus, Anselm, Alcuin, Bede, Lanfranc and the Gregorys, were voluminous authors, writing not only on theology, Scripture, ecclesiastical history and patrology, but on the liberal arts and other profane subjects. We have a list drawn up by Bede himself of some forty-five volumes of which he was the author. In this list are contained, besides homilies and commentaries on the Scripture, works on grammar, logic, geography, orthography, versification, astronomy, music, arithmetic and natural philosophy. Practically all the literature of the first half of the Middle Ages, from the sixth to the eleventh century, was produced by the monks. "From the beginning of monasticism," says Allies, "there were proportionately very few of the monastic writers who were not monks or had not studied with them. This is demonstrated by the names of Athanasius, Basil, Gregory, the theologian, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Maximus, among the Greeks: Jerome, Rufinus, Augustine, Sulpicius, Severus, Cassian, Salvian, Gregory the Great, Fulgentius, Vincent of Lérins and Caesarius of Arles among the Latins."[1] The above-named

[1] *The Monastic Life*, by Thomas W. Allies; London, p. 113.

men were, of course, of the higher order of ability. But there was a host of others in thousands of monasteries scattered over Europe who, though not invested by history with an equal fame, were nevertheless profound scholars and prolific authors. No less fruitful was the splendid work of the monastic copyists in the diffusion of knowledge through the multiplication of books. Hardly had a new volume of any note taken its place on the library shelf of a monastery when its repeated copying began. Many of the monasteries in a given neighborhood had a mutual understanding whereby one loaned to another books which it did not have and in return received for the purpose of copying, the books which it was lacking. Not infrequently gifts of books were made to a monastery by the will of some deceased bishop or nobleman. Finally, the library was oftentimes increased by the outright purchase of books. In this way Benedict Biscop, the first Abbot of Westminster, afterwards Bishop of Northumbria, desiring that all monasteries for which he was in any way responsible should possess good libraries, made repeated journeys to Rome, as the Venerable Bede relates, to obtain books for his monks at Wearmouth and Jarrow. The journeys he made in 671 and 685 were exclusively for that purpose. From both of these visits he returned with large

collections of books he had made there and in Vienne. And it must be borne in mind that such a journey in the seventh century was not the luxurious and pleasurable experience that it is in the twentieth. Ceolfrid, his successor as abbot, doubled the library he had collected. In 794 the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow were attacked by the Danes. The monks were murdered and the monasteries, with their magnificent libraries, consigned to the flames. Thus perished the books that Benedict Biscop had so laboriously collected on his several journeys to Rome. This campaign of rapine and slaughter was continued against the monasteries of England for a period of over seventy years.

At no little expense and greater trouble Cassiodorus collected books of every kind—Scripture, classics in Greek and Latin, histories, Jewish as well as Christian, languages and medical works. The last-named class was intended to serve the needs of the infirmarian. His collection of Greek literature was especially notable, as was also that of Isidore of Seville. Alcuin scoured Europe to obtain books for his monastery at Tours.

Shortly after Alcuin was made director of the school of York, he took charge of the cathedral library, a responsibility which must have been highly congenial to a man of his literary tempera-

ment. In a kind of metrical catalogue, of sufficent interest to bear quoting, he gives us an idea of the character of the principal books which rested upon its shelves. This is the poem:

There shalt thou find the volumes that contain
All of the ancient Fathers who remain;
There all the Latin writers make their home
With those that glorious Greece transferred to Rome,
The Hebrews draw from their celestial stream,
And Africa is bright with learning's beam.

Here shines what Jerome, Ambrose, Hilary thought,
Or Athanasius and Augustine wrought,
Orosius, Leo, Gregory the Great,
Near Basil and Fulgentius coruscate.
Grave Cassiodorus and John Chrysostom
Next Master Bede and learned Aldhelm come,
While Victorinus and Boëthius stand
With Pliny and Pompeius close at hand.

Wise Aristotle looks on Tully near,
Sedulius and Juvencus next appear.
Then come Albinus, Clement, Prosper, too,
Paulinus and Arator. Next we view
Lactantius, Fortunatus. Ranged in line
Virgilius Maro, Statius, Lucan, shine.

Donatus, Priscian, Phobus, Phocas, start
The roll of masters in grammatic art.
Entychius, Servius, Pompey, each extend
The list. Comminian brings it to an end.

There shalt thou find, O reader, many more
Famed for their style, the masters of old lore,
Whose many volumes singly to rehearse
Were far too tedious for our present verse.[1]

[1] *Alcuin and the Rise of the Christian Schools*, by A. F. West; New York, 1892, p. 34.

It will be seen from this enumeration that the exponents of classic culture possessed a very generous representation among the volumes of this eighth century monastic library. The library of York was burned in the twelfth century. When the library at Croyland shared a similar fate in 1091, it contained seven hundred volumes. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the library of St. Edmund's monastery at Bury consisted of two thousand volumes. It must be borne in mind that in the enumeration of the number of volumes in the monastic libraries of the Middle Ages, the word "volume" does not always signify what it does today. A single volume of manuscript usually contained a number of distinct treatises in no way related to each other, and which, according to our modern methods of binding and enumeration would be treated as so many distinct volumes. Thus, in the library of the monastery at Peterborough while at one time there were only two hundred and sixty-eight volumes, these contained no less than 1,700 distinct works.

The principal libraries of England were those to be found in the monasteries of Canterbury, York, Jarrow, Wearmouth, Croyland, Peterborough, Glastonbury, Whitly, Durham and Bury. The first monastic library to be established in England was that founded by St. Augustine at Canter-

bury. The catalogue of this library which St. Augustine and his companions brought with them is preserved at Trinity College, Cambridge. It consists of a Bible in two volumes, a Psalter, a book of the Gospels, a Martyrology, the Apocryphal Lives of the Apostles and an exposition of certain epistles and Gospels. At the end of the catalogue are the words: "These are the foundation or beginning of the library of the whole English Church, A.D. 601." It was afterwards enlarged by Augustine's successor, Theodore of Tarsus, who, besides many other works, added to it several Greek authors. Further enlargements were made by Lanfranc and Anselm, who also were successors to St. Augustine, as Archbishops of Canterbury. In 1300 Henry de Estria's catalogue of this library accounted for 3,006 titles in 1,850 volumes.

Among the first monastic libraries the best known were those of the monasteries of Tours, Lérins, Monte Cassino, Bobbio, Luxueil and St. Gall. But the most famous libraries of the Carlovingian period were those of Fulda, Reichenau, Corvey and Sponheim in Germany; and those of Fleury, St. Riquier, Cluny and Corbie in France. The library of St. Riquier, at the time of Louis the Pious, contained two hundred and fifty-six manuscripts on which were written over five hun-

dred works. Under the direction of Rhabanus Maurus the library of Fulda attained its greatest fame and was regarded as the best in Christendom. In the middle of the sixteenth century, after all the pillaging and wanton destruction of which it had been made the victim by the Reformers, it still contained seven hundred and seventy-four volumes. The library of the monastery of Sponheim owed its place in the educational world to the efforts of its abbot, John Tritheim. When he laid down his crozier at the end of the fifteenth century he had accumulated a library of two thousand volumes, each one of which, it must be borne in mind, had been composed or copied at a time when the art of printing had not been even dreamed of. In Italy the most famous libraries were those of the Benedictines at Monte Cassino —twice destroyed, by the Lombards in the sixth, and by the Saracens in the ninth century—and that of the famous Irish apostle, Columbanus, at Bobbio. The library of the monastery of Novalese, one of the largest in Italy, was said to contain six thousand volumes when it was destroyed by the Saracens. The library of Tegernsee, among other treasures of antiquity, possessed a magnificently illuminated copy of Pliny's *Natural History*. Many of the libraries of Spain, together with the abbeys that contained them, were re-

stored by Gennadius of Astorga. The books, of course, had been irretrievably scattered or destroyed by the Saracens. But by a systematic mutual exchange of all that remained in the different monasteries, each library eventually was possessed of copies of all the works owned by all the others.

Of course the number of books possessed by even the largest of the medieval libraries is insignificant when compared with the enormous libraries which the printing press of the last four hundred years has made possible. But even in the light of this comparison the disparity is not as great as would at first appear, when we remember that even in the eighteenth century a library of fifteen or even ten thousand volumes was considered an unusually large one. But viewed in the light of those days; in the absence of all mechanical means of production; the scarcity and the cost of their substitutes for our modern paper; the paucity of men capable of doing the work; the relatively small number of those interested in literature of any kind; the repeated spoliation by Barbarians and robber barons—viewed in this light the monastic libraries of the earlier Middle Ages are magnificent monuments to the literary industry, love of learning and educational propaganda of the monks of that period. Moreover,

it should be borne in mind that had it not been for the energy, industry and intelligence exercised by the monks in the educational field, many millions of books which we now enjoy and profit by would never have seen the light of day. It has been well said that "It was St. Benedict who provided the 'copy' which a thousand years later was to supply the presses of Gutenberg, Aldus, Froben and Stephanus." Furthermore, it is to be remembered that nearly all of the older monasteries, together with their accumulations of books, were utterly destroyed, in some instances several times. Undoubtedly the most criminal destruction of all was that wrought by the fanatical bigots of the Reformation, against whom Dean Maitland has accumulated such a mass of damning evidence.

So large were many of the monasteries, and so eager were their members to obtain all the knowledge that could be acquired, that some of the larger houses carried on, along business lines, the exchange and sale of books in a manner suggesting the publishing houses of our own day. Among the monasteries so engaged were those of Wearmouth and Jarrow, and Croyland in England; St. Josse-sur-Mer; Bobbio in Italy; Pompossa near Ravenna; La Chuisa, Novalese; Monte Cassino, Fulda and St. Gall.

But these great collections of books which the monks had gathered together through the course of centuries, were not selfishly restricted to the use of their own monastery. As we have seen, the interchange of books between different monasteries, and even between individuals of different monasteries, for the purpose of copying or merely reading, was by no means infrequent. More than that, many of these collections took on the character of public libraries. In fact, the lending of books was considered by the monks as one of the most meritorious of all acts of mercy. Three days of each week, the library of the abbey of St. Victor was open to the general public. In like manner, the monasteries of Leicester, Crowland, Wells and many others, placed their libraries at the disposal of all who might wish to consult them. As a matter of fact, the religious houses of the Benedictines generally provided for the use of their books by persons outside their communities. The same was equally true of the Cistercians and Carthusians.

As a proof of the fact that the libraries of the monastic houses, unlike so many of our modern private collections, were intended for something more than vain display, the following rule, made by Lanfranc while Prior of Beck, concerning the return of all books held by the monks on the first

Sunday in Lent, is much to the point. The monks are commanded to bring back all books to the chapter house: "Let the librarian read a document setting forth the names of the brethren who have had books during the past year; and let each brother, when he hears his own name pronounced, return the book which has been entrusted to him for reading, and let him who is conscious of not having read the book through which he has received, fall down on his face, confess his fault and pray for forgiveness. And let the aforesaid librarian hand each brother another book for reading."

The reverence for books entertained by the monks of the Middle Ages is thus set forth by one of their number, the celebrated Thomas à Kempis: "Fast shut, and with great care the library of sacred books is to be preserved from all defilement of dust, from fire and from damp, from thieves and from the sound of clamor, from clay off the feet, and corrosions of worms, from all stain and rent of leaves. He is not worthy to read a sacred book who knows not how to take care of it, and who neglects to put it back in its proper place. Thus must be preserved the Treasury of the Church, made and edited by holy doctors, written and collected by good writers, and provided by God for the consolations of many."[1]

[1] *Doctrinale Juvenum.*, cap. 5.

The tender care with which it was intended that the monks should handle their books, is shown by the following order of a General Benedictine Chapter of England: "When the religious are engaged in reading they shall, if possible, hold the books in their left hands, wrapped in the sleeve of their tunics and resting on their knees, their right hands shall be uncovered, with which to hold and turn the leaves of the aforesaid books."

And yet, once the art of printing was invented, none were quicker to avail themselves of this new process than the monks of the Catholic Church. As early as 1474 a book was printed by the monks in a convent of the Rhingan. One of the first to encourage Caxton with his patronage was the Abbot of Westminster, in whose abbey he established a printing press. In 1480, a printing press was set up in the monastery of St. Alban, with the permission of William Wallingford, its prior. Shortly after the invention of the printing press, one of them was set up in the abbey of Tavistock, where the printer was a monk, one Thomas Ryehard. The first printing press used in Italy was one that was established in the monastery of St. Scholastica, the output of which was highly esteemed

because of the excellence of its workmanship.[1] It is quite evident, therefore, that Catholics no less than others were quick to recognize and encourage the new art which of necessity would forever end the labors of their devoted copyists.

[1] *Mores Catholici*, v. 1, p. 554.

CHAPTER XII

MONASTIC CHARITY

WHILE the monks thus labored with every means at their disposal to improve the condition of the people, and bring order and happiness out of the social chaos and world-wide misery that surrounded them, they were not indifferent to the pressing needs of those whom misfortune, in one way or another, had rendered incapable of earning a livelihood. Indeed the hospitality and charity of the monks are proverbial wherever men are versed in the history of medieval institutions. Perhaps one of the most striking statements in support of this contention is to be found in the words of an historian who was at the same time a Protestant clergyman. "Monasteries," says Neander, "were seats for the promotion of various trades, arts and sciences. The gains accruing from their combined labor

were employed for relief of the distressed. In great famines thousands were rescued from starvation."[1] But, as we shall see, this was only a single item in the long catalogue of activities by which the monks contributed to the social betterment of the individual as well as of society in general.

There was nothing perhaps in the whole cycle of blessings which monasticism conferred upon society, that endeared the monks more to their fellow-men, than the charity, in its noblest and truest sense, which they systematically and unfailingly dispensed to the poor of Christ. It was easy enough perhaps to teach trades to the youthful inhabitants of the neighborhood, who would speedily convert them into sources of public and private wealth. Neither was it difficult to understand why they should teach the people new and scientific methods of agriculture, when such methods were bound to improve the value of the lands leased by the monks to their neighbors. The teaching of letters was something provided for, anyway, by their rule, and its extension to the children of the people might probably have in view the creation of a source of supply for future novitiates. The public improvements which the monks effected in such large numbers would no

[1] *Eccl. Hist.*, v. 7, p. 331.

doubt be helpful and profitable to themselves as well as to their neighbors. But the bestowal of charity on the vast scale and in the systematic manner in which it was carried out by these men of God, was something that could have been prompted only by a supernatural love for their fellow-men and which could hope for no return in the values of this world.

The feeding of the hungry, the support of the sick, the helpless, and the unfortunate, either in the character of charity or philanthropy, was something that had never entered into the social programmes of the states of antiquity. Theirs was a brutal utilitarian system which was quite content with what was considered the survival of the fittest. Asylums for the victims of bodily ills and mental disorders, whether temporary or permanent, did not as a rule come within the range of their interests, and found no place in their solicitude and planning. Hospitals, homes, shelters, and all such like institutions never rose above the horizon of their social vision. This was to be the work of Christianity, and the monks as the conservators and transmitters of Christian civilization were the first to reduce this vision to actuality.

Charity and philanthropy differ in the motives that underlie their activities. The service of charity is prompted by a love of neighbor for

God's sake; whereas philanthropy only serves man within the sphere of his natural interests. And since man is made up of body as well as soul, the corporal works of mercy pertained no less to the cycle of monastic activities than the chanting of the Divine Office or the self-infliction of penitential exercises. Amidst the mighty movements, therefore, that made for the re-creation of society and civilization in field, school, monastery and scriptorium, the monks were always mindful of the necessities of God's poor. Dr. Johnson, the famous lexicographer and moralist, used to say that the real criterion of civilization consisted in the degree of provision made for the happiness of the poor. According to this standard the civilization created by the monks out of the chaos of the early Middle Ages was indeed a wonderful one. At the monastery door the weary traveller was always sure of refreshment and rest. The sick were cheerfully welcomed into the hospitals erected and maintained by the monks. Besides these, the poor wretch pursued by avenging enemies who reached their portals, knew that he had found temporary respite from the destroying anger of those who hated him.

"Education, mercy, medical science, charity, hospitality, and all the alms," says a well-known writer, "were centered in the religious houses,

which also acted as trustees and guardians for orphans and minors." They were therefore not only necessarily large to accommodate lay-brothers, scholars, guests, and servants, but often large on account of the enormous part they played in common life, and the incredible throngs that came to them for worship and to claim their ministrations. In these vast beehives of industry they seem to have anticipated all the philanthropic activities of the present day. "In the Middle Ages," says Feasey, "the monastery contained under its roof many institutions: The public school, the almshouse, the hotel, the hospital, the dispensary, the workhouse, the central bureau of employment and general information."[1]

Not only did the monks dispense their own possessions with generous hand, but in time became the trustees of large estates which their owners left to them at death for the purpose of disbursing them among the poor. Indeed, as Lecky observes, one of the chief causes of the inordinate power acquired by the clergy was their mediatorial office.[2] The same writer, despite his well-known antipathy for most things Catholic, pens this tribute to the monks: "As time rolled

[1] *Monasticism: What Is It?* By J. Feasey; London, 1898, p. 100.

[2] *Hist. Europ. Morals*, v. 2, p. 84.

on charity assumed many forms and every monastery became a centre from which it radiated. By the monks the nobles were overawed and the poor protected, the sick tended, travellers sheltered, prisoners ransomed, the remotest spheres of suffering explored. During the darkest period of the Middle Ages, the monks found shelters for pilgrims among the horrors of the Alpine snows." [1]

The efforts of the abbots of the Middle Ages to provide against any abuse in the disbursement of monastic funds during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are recorded in the following words: "We beseech and exort our successor, the abbots and the brethren, in the bowels of Christ, and of His Holy Mother, to take care that the goods of the hospital (St. Maximus of Treves) shall be applied according to the foundation, to the use of the poor and the sick, and never alienated for any purpose; but if the contrary shall ever take place, we execrate the perpetrators, and desire that they be struck with anathema and excommunication."

In an age of feudalism, when the measure of one's might frequently constituted the sole measure of his right to have and to hold what he had, and when the abstract principles of justice figured

[1] *Ibid.*

but little in the dealings of men, it was a blessed thing for society that the fundamental virtues of justice and right were cultivated and propagated in the temples of monasticism. "The monasteries," says Kingsley, "were the refuges whither the weak escaped from the competition of the strong. Thither flocked the poor, the crippled, the orphan, all, in fact, who could not fight for themselves. There they found something like justice, order, pity, help. Even the fool and the coward, when they went to the convent door were not turned away. The poor half-witted rascal who had not sense enough to serve the king might still serve the abbot. He would be set to drive a plough, hew wood—possibly by the side of a gentleman, or even a prince, and live under equal terms with them; and under, too, a discipline more strict than that of any modern army.'"[1]

It must be borne in mind that the monks were reconstructing, indeed, recreating, society and civilization; and were fully conscious of the necessity of building their work on a solid foundation. They had learned from Lactantius, whose works they had so often copied, that while justice is the deep groundwork and broad foundation of society, charity is its binding principle. Justice and char-

[1] *The Roman and the Teuton,* Charles Kingsley, Lecture IV, p. 213; London, 1906.

ity, therefore, they were determined should run through the entire structure of reconstructed civilization, and manifest themselves in all the inter-relations of men. And so while they gradually established courts of justice and elaborated codes of civil law, the monks also had a care for those to whom adversity and affliction had been lifelong companions. Within these monastic courts blindfolded justice held her scales, nor suffered aught but justice and charity to determine their balance.

The attitude of the monks towards God's suffering poor was well expressed by one of them in the following words: "It matters little that our churches rise to heaven, that the capitals of their pillars are sculptured and gilded, that our parchment is tinted purple, that gold is melted to form the letters of our manuscripts, and that their bindings are set with precious stones, if we have little or no care for the members of Christ, and if Christ Himself lies naked and dying before our doors." The secret of their wonderful charity lay in the fact that in the person of the poor and afflicted they saw the person of Christ Himself and treated them accordingly. Theirs was not the unfeeling, fruitless, institutional philanthropy that in the name of social science invades the privacy of the poor, gathers volumes of statistics of a

personal nature, makes public exhibition of the wretchedness of the destitute, and comforts them with weighty volumes of scientific theories concerning poverty, its prevention and cure. Nor would they even permit the recipients of their bounty to look upon their gifts in the light of alms; the poor at the monastery gate were made to feel that what they received was their very own, transmitted by the hand of God through the person of His almoner, the monk.

Naturally the most effective, as well as the most intimate and direct manifestation of monastic charity was in the giving of alms to God's poor—to those who knew not otherwise wherewith they were to be nourished from day to day. While all in need, without distinctions of any kind, had a never failing claim for recognition on the charity of the monastery, especially dear to the almoner's heart were the aged and the helpless of the vicinity. Helping such as these was regarded not only in the light of a privilege but of a sacred duty, heavily binding in conscience. So it was regarded by the Carthusians, as the following quotation from their capitulary clearly indicates: "Therefore, we exhort and implore all persons of our Order, in the bowels of the same God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, who suffered Himself to be suspended from the wood of the cross for us, that

according to the faculty of the respective houses, they would apply their whole hearts to giving great alms. For there is nothing so accordant with nature as that we should do to others what we would desire to have done to ourselves in a similar necessity."[1] That this was no meaningless, or merely formal, utterance is evident from the innumerable monastic ruins which remained long after the blind fury of the Reformation had subsided. The spirit of Christian charity of those days was not one that filled the people with the spirit of smug complacency, but one that stirred them to the most remarkable deeds of Christian helpfulness and good will towards all.

"So long as a monastery existed," says Bishop Shahan, "no poor man could go hungry, and the duty of giving to the hungry and the poor was looked on everywhere as the highest of all (charity). War, pestilence, famine, worked their ravages, it is true, but in ordinary life the hungry and starving poor were rare in medieval Europe. Nor was this accomplished by statute law, nor with painful humiliation, but in love for Jesus' sake, because He, too, had been a poor man, because the poor man bore the image and likeness of the Creator even as his richer brother; because after

[1] *Annales Ord. Cartusiensis*, tom. 1, Lib. 3, cap. 20.

all the rich man was only the steward of his wealth and not its absolute owner."[1]

Unlike imperial Rome, which it had seen fall into ruin and decay, monasticism did not content itself with throwing an occasional largess of food or money to the poor of the surrounding country. Their giving was constant. It was not in the nature of a grudging gift that neither blessed the giver nor enriched the receiver. It was not given in the frigid spirit of modern scientific philanthropy; but in a spirit of Christian charity which recognized God alone as the absolute owner and dispenser of all things, and the poor as the honorable wards of Christ. That the exhortations of the monks to alms-giving, and the exemplification of their own exhortations, were neither sporadic nor insignificant, is proved by the voluminous evidence we find of its translation into deeds of the highest and most enduring charity. A few examples of this monastic charity, as distinct from mere philanthropy, will make the matter clear.

Shortly after monasticism had taken possession of Europe in the eighth and ninth centuries, every monastery had a house adjoining for the comfort and refreshment of the poor and the traveller. In this manner, it will be seen, a system of charitable

[1] *The Middle Ages*, by Bishop Shahan, p. 75.

relief was maintained on an elaborate scale throughout the length and breadth of Europe. Feasey says: "In times of special distress and of famine the huge monastic barns provided a ready sustenance for populations which would otherwise have starved. The great St. Bernard thus provided for two thousand people from one harvest to another."[1]

But it was not only in times of public stress and disaster that the monks, in a spirit of Christian charity, dispensed food and clothing among the poor and afflicted. It was their daily practice to bestow assistance on all who stood in need of it. The truth of this is borne out by the following statement concerning the Abbot of Cluny, by a medieval writer: "Every day eighteen prebends, or portions, allotted to the poor of the place were distributed, consisting of portions of bread with beans four days a week, and vegetables the remaining three. On great solemnities, and twenty-five times a year, meat instead of beans. At Easter, nine cubits of woollen stuff to each person, and at Christmas, a pair of shoes. Other extraordinary benefactions on anniversaries of illustrious personages. Each week the Almoner washed the feet of three poor men (with warm

[1] *Monasticism: What Is It?* By J. Feasey; London, 1898, p. 104.

water in winter), giving to each a pound of bread, and the usual pittance described above. Besides all this, each day was distributed twelve pasties, each weighing three pounds, to widows, orphans, the blind and lame, the aged and sick, who might present themselves. Twice a week the Almoner had also to traverse the abbey domain, in order to seek out the sick and to carry them bread, wines, and provisions of the best." Nor is this an isolated instance of monastic charity. Rather it is typical of the entire institution of monasticism. It ceased in England only at the time of the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII, when the charity of the monks was supplanted by the poor-laws and poor-houses of Henry and Edward, which caused the aged and homeless poor of Christ to contemplate the future with horror and despair.

As the number of monasteries, with their sanctuaries of Christian charity, ran into the thousands, it will be impossible to do more than select a few examples of the different charitable activities exercised in each. Before his investiture with the tiara, and while yet a simple monk, Gregory the Great maintained an hospitium adjoining his monastery for the entertainment of the poor, where every day he gave dinner to twelve poor strangers. This was in the last quarter of the

sixth century. The succeeding century gave birth to many imitators of Gregory in the house of his spiritual father, St. Benedict.

In the ninth century St. Anselm, Abbot of Nonantula, built a zenodochium, or lodging-house, for strangers who were travelling. Here everyone who presented himself received hospitality and protection. In an adjoining building the sick were served and tenderly cared for, however long the period of their illness might be. On the first day of every month over two hundred persons received food at the monastery. No less generous were the monks of St. Riquier, where every day five sous were given to the passing mendicant, and where three hundred poor, including one hundred and fifty widows, were maintained at the expense of the monastery.

No less unconsciously eloquent of monastic charity are the annals of the monastery of Heisterbach, near Cologne, where during the famine of 1197 the abbot left nothing undone to relieve the distress of the people. Every day while the famine lasted Abbot Gebbard had an ox slaughtered which, with large quantities of bread, was daily given to the hundreds of people who flocked to the monastery door seeking food. This princely munificence continued till the ripened harvests placed the people beyond the need of further

assistance. From the tenth to the seventeenth century, charity was dealt out to the indigent in unstinted measure by the monks of the famous monastery of Treves. Twice a week bread was liberally handed out to all who asked for it; and sometimes the number gathered outside the monastery gate ran as high as six hundred. Not even the advent of the most important dignitaries of the country was permitted to interfere with this work. In the oldest statutes of Corbie it was provided that "if strangers should unexpectedly arrive from far off provinces, in excess of the number usually cared for, they should be provided as far as possible with what was necessary; but not to the extent of diminishing the amount of food daily given to the indigent people of the neighborhood."[1]

How constantly these men of God kept the poor in mind, may be deduced from the following words taken from the same source. "If it should happen," say the statutes, "that at any time fewer people come to the hospitium the porters are to keep the circumstance in mind, in order that another time when more persons arrive, what was then left over may be distributed."[2] But it was

[1] *Statuta Antiqua Corbiensis*, cap. 4, apud Dacher. Spicileg. tom. iv.
[2] *Ibid.*

not the spirit of monastic charity to minister merely to those who should apply at the monastery gate. The monks were well aware that many, through a sense of shame, were kept from seeking the alms of which they were in direst need. At regular intervals, therefore, the almoner of the monastery was sent on his rounds to search them out and minister to them.

One of the most famous monasteries in Spain was situated a short distance from Xeres. That it was thoroughly imbued with the spirit that usually characterized Catholic institutions of the Middle Ages is quite apparent from the practices that obtained there. The monks of this house began the education of thirty poor children of the neighborhood and carried it to completion. Having thus provided for the helplessness of childhood, they gave their next thought to the second childhood of old age; and to succor these equally helpless members of society, twelve old men past the age of self-support were brought into the monastery to end their days in peace and comfort among them. The thought ever present in the minds of these great servants of Christ was that they were merely the ministers of their heavenly Father, to whom was given the glorious privilege of feeding the weaklings of the flock. It was therefore with no reluctant hand or stinted meas-

ure that they distributed the goods of the monastery. "We beseech all persons," says a famous Abbot of Corbie, "who may be appointed to office in this monastery, that in point of largess and distribution, they may attend rather to the will of God than to the example of our parsimony, since every one will have to render an account for himself."[1]

The assignment of monastic tithes to the purposes of public charity was in practice as early as the first quarter of the ninth century. In this century the Abbot of Lobes decreed that the tithes of the monastery and its possessions should be distributed to the poor of the vicinity at the gates of the monastery.[2] It was the same at the Abbey of St. Peter of Corby, as we learn from its Ancient Statutes, written by the Abbot Adalard in 822.[3] But perhaps the most sweeping declaration of the extent to which charity was practiced in the monasteries, is that made by Calmet[4] in which he says that the Order of St. Benedict was in the habit of giving to the poor the tithes of all their resources, wine, cattle, corn and money. This was ex-

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[1] *Ibid*, cap. 5.

[2] *Fulcuinus de Gestis Abbatum Lobiensium*, apud Dacher, Spicileg, tom. 6, p. 558.

[3] *Antiqua Corbiensis*, cap. 6, apud Dacher, Spicileg, tom. 4.

[4] *Comment sur la Regle de S. Ben.*, tom 1, c. 4, Mons. 271, v. 3.

clusive of occasional alms, which were sometimes of an extraordinary amount.

Preceding by centuries all these splendid examples of monastic charity, was the example of the monks of St. Benedict in England when that mighty and famous Order was still in its infancy. The very first years of the seventh century witnessed its introduction into the land of the Saxons; and a thousand years of ceaseless ministration to God's suffering poor must elapse before ungrateful Albion would crush and destroy the mighty institute that had led her out of barbarism and ignorance into the white light of Christian civilization.

When St. Augustine, the monastic apostle of England, wrote to that other immortal monk, Gregory the Great, asking how bishops were to divide the offerings made for their support, the Pope replied: "The custom of the Apostolic See is to hand over a rule to bishops when ordained, to divide all their income into four portions—one for the bishop and his household for hospitality and reception, a second for the clergy, a third for the poor, a fourth for the repair of churches."[1] It must be borne in mind that at this time, and for centuries afterwards, the hierarchy as well as

[1] *The Monastic Life*, T. W. Allies, p. 202.

the clergy of England were drawn exclusively from the Benedictine Order. For over two hundred years the entire Church in England was administered by the Benedictines, and during these two centuries Christian charity grew in volume as well as in the intensity of the Christian spirit. A few instances of the manner in which the spirit of Christian charity found expression in the monasteries of England, will help us to understand how great was the loss sustained by the homeless and helpless poor of that country when the destruction of the monasteries was at last an accomplished fact.

At the Abbey of St. Tron two houses were set aside for the comfort of the poor. One of these was a summer house, and the other a winter house containing fireplaces for the comfort of its occupants. William of Malmesbury tells us that the monastery of Redding, occupied by the monks of Cluny, spent more in entertaining poor guests than in maintaining the entire community.

Writing of the Abbot Odo of Battle Abbey, one of its chroniclers says: "Rich in the bowels of compassion, he relieved everyone who sought his assistance. The abbey gates stood open to all comers who needed refreshment or lodging. His hospitality knew no respect of persons. For those persons whom the rule of the establishment for-

bade to sleep in their abbey, he provided entertainment outside the circuit of the walls."[1]

During a famine, Leofrick, the tenth Abbot of St. Albans, did not hesitate to sell even the treasures of the church to provide food for the poor, "retaining," as we are told, "only precious gems for which he could find no purchaser." Twice a week the poor of the surrounding country were fed by the abbot of the monastery at Glastonbury. At Furness Abbey there was a custom observed on St. Crispin's Day of slaughtering five oxen and distributing their meat among the poor. Besides this, bread was daily doled out to those in extreme need. It has been computed that before the monks were dispossessed of their monastery, their annual charities amounted to $2,500 of our money, which in that day, according to a most conservative estimate, was equivalent to $13,000 of present day American values.

Not even that which was given to them for their own maintenance was retained for that purpose. This was especially true in regard to tithes. It not infrequently happened in those days that the owners of the land built at their own expense a chapel wherein they and their families, their dependent serfs and vassals might worship. In such

[1] *The Greater Abbeys of England*, Abbot Gasquet, p. 29.

instances the monks, to whose care was committed the chapel or church, divided the tithes in the following manner: one-third for the repair and ornaments of the churches; a second for the poor and the stranger; and a third for themselves.

So universal was the spirit of monastic charity throughout England prior to the Reformation, that there was no need of poor laws, and as a matter of fact none existed. During the thousand years that preceded the Reformation there was comparatively little real poverty in England; and what there was usually was taken care of by the monasteries and the guilds. Unavoidable poverty did not become a disgrace and a crime till the Reformation had accomplished its unholy mission.

But a sad change took place in England when the monasteries were overthrown by the servants of Henry VIII. Just as soon as these institutions of mercy were suppressed, England was overrun with beggars. Dr. Sharp, whose exact and comprehensive knowledge of the records of the city of London was unsurpassed, says that the sudden closing of the monasteries filled the streets with the homeless sick and poor. They groped blindly through the streets of every city; no longer able to carry on the unequal struggle, in large numbers they lay down by the wayside and died. In not a few instances the former wards of the monks,

unable to earn or beg the means of sustaining life, ended their wretched lives with suicide. In the sixty years that followed the overthrow of the old system it was necessary for Parliament to pass no less than twelve acts dealing with the relief of distress, the necessity for which Thorold Rogers lays at the doors of those who brought about the expulsion of the monks.

In further testimony of this truth we have a damning statement from the lips of one of the ministers of the Church established by law. "The devil," says a contemporary of those of whom he spoke, "cunningly turneth things his own way. Examples of this we have seen in our own time more than I can have leisure to express or rehearse. In the acts of Parliament that we have made in our days, what godly preambles have gone before the same; even *quasi oraculum Apollinis,* as though the things that follow had come from the counsel of the highest in heaven; and yet the end hath been either to destroy chauntries or abbeys or colleges, or such like, by which some have gotten much land and have been made men of great possessions. But many an honest poor man hath been undone by it, and an innumerable multitude hath perished for default and lack of sustenance. And this misery hath long continued and hath not yet (1556) an end. Moreover all

this commotion and fray was made under pretence of a common profit and common defence, but in very deed it was for private and common lucre."[1]

So complete was the plundering of the monasteries at the outbreak of the Reformation that nothing, however small, was overlooked. "In the general scramble of the terror," says the Protestant, Dr. Jessop, "under Henry VIII, and of the anarchy in the days of Edward VI, monasteries were plundered to their very pots and pans." The very words "pauper" and "pauperism" had no meaning to the English people till after the monasteries had been razed to the ground. It can hardly be wondered at, therefore, that when the people saw the monasteries, to which they were attached by so many happy memories, being confiscated and destroyed, their blood grew hot within them and, when it was too late, they rose in abortive rebellion against the destroyers of their monastic friends and benefactors.

The dependents of the monasteries were not the only ones who suffered by their suppression. Those who labored on the monastic demesnes, and those who rented the monastery land were soon made to feel that the change from monastic to lay landlords was one not conducive to their peace of

[1]Roger Edgworth, *Sermons,* London, R. Caly, p. 309.

mind. In some instance rents were increased fifty per cent. But the change served at least one good purpose—it brought the people to a keen realization of what a happy thing it is to dwell beneath the shadow of the crosier.

But the monks were not content with this service to the unfortunate among their fellow-men. Among the other humanitarian works for which they deserve the everlasting gratitude of mankind were their efforts in behalf of the serfs. Not only did they themselves eventually liberate all this unfortunate class that fell into their hands, but they constantly exerted their influence for the complete suppression of this unchristian distinction among men. Even before the break-up of the Roman Empire they had lifted their feeble voices against the accursed institution of slavery. And from that time on whenever the opportunity offered, they had unfailingly exercised their growing influence in the interest of human liberty.

It is true their unselfish efforts were often set at naught by the powerful robber baron, securely ensconced in his embattled castle on the mountainside. But there was one enemy against whom moats, bastions and battlements were of no avail —Death. And just before Death passed over the drawbridge, a monk from the abbey at the foot of the mountain must be admitted to shrive

hundred and fifty serfs directly they were given him with some land by King Edilwalsh on the day of his baptism. When in the reign of Charlemagne the Duke St. William put on the habit of religion, he not only generously gave of his possessions to the poor but he gave complete liberty to his serfs. It was the same heroic spirit of Christian justice that prompted Benedict of Aniana to enfranchise a large number of slaves that had come into his possession with a large estate adjoining his monastery near Montpellier. We read that in 1292 the Abbey of St. Maur liberated its serfs at Valenton, as previously it had liberated those at Creteil.[1] In 1248 William, Abbot of St. Denis, gave letters of manumission to all the serfs of Villeneuve and Courbevoye, while in the previous year the serfs of Nauterre were enfranchised by Thibaud, Abbot of Genevieve.

But it may be said these are isolated instances spread over a long period of time and do not represent the general attitude of the monks in the matter of human liberty. To which we reply that these instances may be multiplied without number, did space permit or necessity require it. But the unanswerable proof of the matter is to be found in the Benedictine Rule itself. These are

[1]Lebeuf, *Hist. du Diocese de Paris.*

the words of the Rule: "The free-born monk is not to be preferred to the one who was formerly a slave—because whether slave or freeman, we are all one in Christ: and under our Lord we wage a common warfare of servitude for Christ: for with God there is no distinction of persons."[1]

The monasteries also served as asylums for the protection of the weak and the defenceless. Here the hunted slave could always be sure of asylum from the lash of his infuriated master. And they received not only the slave but all the victims of persecution to whom monasticism extended asylum within her institutions. As Lecky tells us, "they constituted an invaluable counterpoise to the rude military forces of the times; familiarized the imagination of men with the types of men that could hardly fail in some degree to soften their character; and led the way to most forms of peaceful labor. The monastery church, like every other church in the Middle Ages, enjoyed the privilege of sanctuary for all those who were hunted by their fellows. "By an established law," says Hallam, "the precincts of a church afforded sanctuary to accused persons. Under a due administration

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[1] *"Non praeponatur ingenuus ex servitio convertenti—quia sive servus, sive liber, omnes in Christo unus summus: et sub uno Domino aequalem servitutis militiam bajulamus: qia non est personarum acceptio apud Deum"* (Cap. 2).

of justice the principle would have been simply and constantly mischievous . . . . But in the rapine and tumult of the Middle Ages, the right of sanctuary might as often be a shield to innocence as immunity to crime."[1] Here slave and king could alike be sure of an equal protection from the vengeance of their pursuers. About the middle of the sixth century, a son of Chilperic, King of Neustria, fled to the monastery of Tours. In hot pursuit the king followed him to the very gates of the monastery. But notwithstanding his threats to ravage the estates of the monastery if his son were not delivered over to his vengeance, the monks remained steadfast in their refusal to violate the right of sanctuary which the hapless youth had invoked.

The study and practice of medicine and chemistry also engaged the minds of these religious men in their splendid effort to help in every need and necessity of suffering humanity. It must be borne in mind that in the entire fields of medicine and chemistry these men were just as praiseworthy investigators and pioneers in the realms of these two sciences as are our modern scientists with the accumulated knowledge of fifteen hundred years to start from. To the monasteries the people nat-

[1] *The Middle Ages,* Henry Hallam; vol. 2, pp. 494, 495.

urally came with their physical as well as with their spiritual troubles. And it was to meet these demands upon their learning, which could not be satisfied elsewhere, that the monks applied themselves to the task of wresting from nature her secrets of elementary medicine. It was to meet this need that Dom Nicholas Alexander, a Benedictine monk of the congregation of St. Maur, published two works on medicine. The Carthusians were especially noted for their ability in compounding medicines. In every monastery there was the modern apothecary shop in embryo. Here the simple elements of chemistry, the fruit of close observation and study, were utilized in compounding homely remedies for the sick of the surrounding country. But we have no reason to doubt that in ordinary ills they were usually effective and never as destructive as the costly nostrums of our own day.

Not even the loathsome leper, ordinarily beyond the pale of human comfort and mercy, as far as all others were concerned, was ever denied assistance by the monks. In these consecrated men of God the repulsive and dreaded outcast found Christ again incarnate, and full of pity. The fear of personal contagion did not deter them from exercising the offices of Christian pity. Lecky tells us that when this hideous disease extended

its fearful ravages over Europe, when men viewed its presence in their neighborhood with horror, not only because of its loathsomeness and contagion, but also because of the notion that in a certain sense it was supernatural, new hospitals and refuges overspread Europe and monks came in great numbers to serve in them.[1]

Odericus Vitalis tells us that the Abbey of Ouches took upon itself the support of seven lepers, each of whom received the same portion of food as the monks themselves. In his life of St. Othmar, Abbot of St. Gall, Walifried Strabo tells us that this saintly man caused a hospital to be erected near his own monastery, and that he himself often walked to it at night to comfort the victims of this terrible plague.

And as it was with the leper so it was with the insane. The monks were their defenders and helpers. A Spanish monk named Juan Gilaberto Joffre, filled with compassion, as Lecky tells us, at the sight of maniacs maltreated in the streets of Valentia, founded an asylum in that city to care for them. His humane example was quickly followed in other places.[2]

With the revenues derived from their own lands they maintained guides in the difficult passes

[1] *Hist. Europ. Mor.*, v. 2, p. 84.
[2] *Ibid*, v. 3, p. 309.

of the mountains and along the more difficult and confusing roads for the purpose of aiding the traveller to attain his journey's end. In connection with these religious houses they maintained hospices for the shelter of the stranger and the traveller. Such a building was built at Auvergne as early as 1120, beside a mountain pass covered with snow during eight months of the year. And this was but one of many such humanitarian institutions that stood beside the mountain roads throughout Europe. It was in this manner that the monks in every field of human service contributed to the well-being of their fellowmen, content with the service they had given and the reward they knew they would find awaiting them in eternity.

CHAPTER XIII

THE MONKS AND THE EVANGELIZATION OF EUROPE

1. IN GENERAL

THUS far we have considered the influence of monasticism in the secular order, *i.e.*, in relation to the benefits it conferred on humanity quite apart from the domain of the supernatural. It may seem, therefore, that in now dealing with the topic of evangelization we have departed from our programme and introduced a subject foreign to our plan. But such is not the case. Quite the contrary. The material blessings which monasticism conferred upon humanity were but the by-products of the work of envangelization. It was because of the monks coming among the Barbarians for the primary purpose of communicating to them the knowledge of Christ and His teachings, that

all the blessings of civilization were placed at their disposal.

Thus far we have considered the character of the blessings thus conferred. In now treating of the evangelizing labors of monasticism we indicate how tremendous was the field in which these labors were prosecuted, and how innumerable were the multitudes which were made the beneficiaries of its civilizing influence. Not merely the continent of Europe witnessed the titanic character of their labors, but even the island homes of future nations lying adjacent to their shores were the fortunate objects of their fruitful solicitude. Not even the icy fastness of the frozen north could chill their ardor, and so Iceland and other northern islands come within the range of their saving mission.

Taking their lives in their hands, the monks boldly advanced into trackless forests, desert places and hostile territory, among tribes wilder and more repellent than the land they inhabited; onward they went, determined at any price to reconquer the world for Christ. With a divine enthusiasm they flung themselves into the Barbarian hordes and, having imposed upon them the twofold yoke of Christianity and civilization, they led them willing captives within the pale of Holy Church. Addressing themselves to the intellects

of the invaders, they taught them the dignity and power of knowledge. Having softened the harshness and rudeness of their manners, they restrained the impetuosity of their savage natures and inculcated the necessity of law and order. And this they did without in the least diminishing the initiative or the splendid virility of the Barbarians, so essential to the great and difficult work of reconstruction of which they were to be the unconscious instruments. They armed them against the excesses and vices of civilization, no less than against the brutal impulses of their own savage nature. They placed in their hands the most precious of all knowledge—that of the Sacred Scriptures—and set up for their guidance the ethical standards of Jesus Christ. But they were to be the glorious apostles of a material as well as a moral regeneration; and so they taught them how to build towns and cities; how to populate the rural districts; how to combine them in larger political units for the purpose of government; how to govern them with laws founded upon the principles of Christian justice and natural rights.

At first thought it would seem that monasticism in general, with its contemplative spirit, and the Benedictine Order in particular, with its vow of stability (the vow to remain for life in the monastery in which one's vows were uttered) would

offer but a poor instrument for carrying on the pioneer work of evangelization. But as a matter of fact, the very things that seemed to unfit the Benedictines for the active apostolate only guaranteed and enhanced the success of their labors in the vineyards of the Lord. While the individual communities of monastic missionaries did not possess the mobility of the friars who in succeeding centuries carried the cross of Christ to the nations sitting in darkness beyond the borders of medieval Europe, other monastic communities, formed from the overflow of the parent houses, taking up more advanced positions in the wilderness, gave to the work of the whole institute a decidedly progressive and mobile character. Moreover, the permanency of the individual community in the place of its first location enabled it to build up and expand its work on a most solid foundation and to impart to it the spirit of its own stability. Again, it enabled the newly-made converts to witness the practical character of the Christian system, as well as its flower and fruit as illustrated in the daily lives of the monastic missionaries, a thing in itself productive of boundless inspiration. In this manner the monks not only brought home to the pagans among whom they labored, the fundamental teachings of the Christian Church, not only familiarized them with the

ethical system of Jesus Christ, but in their own lives and monastic homes furnished them with a working model of a Christian community from which to copy, and on which to build their own society. And when we realize that there were 37,000 Benedictine monasteries alone, we can form some idea of the evangelizing power exercised by the monastic orders during the seven centuries of their undisputed apostolate.

The only countries of Western Europe that had been christianized when Benedict died, in 543, were Italy, Spain, Gaul, and parts of the British Isles. The conversion from heathenism of the rest of Europe was to be the work of the next five centuries, and mostly was to be the fruit of Benedictine zeal and sacrifice. When Gibbon says that the warlike Barbarians of Scythia and Germany, after subverting the Empire, embraced the religion of the Romans, he utters a truth incontestably witnessed by the innumerable monuments of Benedictine learning, piety and zeal.[1] In definite evidence of this Mabillon tells us that there were founded in the sixth century eighty new monasteries in the valleys of Saone and the Rhine; ninety-four in the country of the Pyrenees and the Loire; fifty-four between the Loire and

[1] *The Fall of the Roman Empire,* Chap. 37.

the Vosges; ten from the Vosges—in a word, two hundred and thirty-eight in one century!

Among the great monastic missionaries who tirelessly labored to spread the reign of Christ over Europe were: Augustine, in England; Patrick (who in all probability was a monk), in Ireland; Columba, in Scotland; Columbanus, in France, Switzerland and Italy; Willibrord, in the Netherlands; Rupert and Emmeron, in Austria; Adalbert, in Bohemia; Gall, in Switzerland. To each of these valiant champions of Christ we shall accord such consideration as space will permit.

2. *Conversion of England*

One day Gregory the Great, still a monk, while passing through the Forum in Rome, was struck with the fair complexion of some captives exposed for sale in the slave market. Inquiry revealed the fact that they were Angles. "They are well named," he said, "for these Angles have the faces of angels." Pondering on what he had seen, he conceived the heroic purpose of consecrating his life to the conversion of their nation. But the Roman people loved him too dearly to consent to any such project. Afterward, when he had been elevated to the Papacy, he recalled the earnest desire of his earlier years, and since it was now

out of the question for him to realize it in person, he determined to do so vicariously. His love for Britain had not abated in the years intervening since he had first seen the blue-eyed, golden-haired Angles in the market-place at Rome. And so, even while the Lombards were thundering at the gates of Rome, he planned for the evangelization of England.

His first step was the purchase of a number of Anglo-Saxon slaves, similar to those he had seen in the Forum, for the purpose of educating and ordaining them and sending them back as missionaries to their native land. But this plan he soon abandoned for one destined to be crowned with the fullest measure of immediate success. In 595, he organized a band of forty monastic missionaries under the leadership of Augustine, a fellow Benedictine[1] and abbot of Gregory's own monastery of St. Andrew in Rome. To this select band he intrusted the perilous and momentous task of converting England to the faith of Christ, and in God's name sent them forth.

This was by no means the first apostolate of the Church in England. In the first half of the fourth

[1]In recent times historians have raised a doubt as to whether or not Augustine was really a member of the Benedictine Order. Thus far, however, sufficient evidence has not been adduced to justify the abandonment of the current version of the matter.

century the bulk of the inhabitants of Britain were Christians. Indeed, some of the British Christians had suffered martyrdom under Diocletian. But in 449 the Saxons, under the leadership of Hengist and Horsa, invaded England and, having conquered its inhabitants, destroyed the churches and drove the Christian Britons into the mountains of the western part of the island, where the latter lost contact not only with Rome, the fountain-head of Christendom, but even with the usages of civilization itself.

The work of conquest completed, the conquerers divided England into a heptarchy, or seven independent kingdoms of unequal extent and influence, under the general direction of a Bretwalda, or chief king. The Bretwalda's authority, as such, was largely nominal, and as a result the invaders soon fell to fighting among themselves and filled the land with the tumult of war.

In regard to the spiritual condition of Britain at the time St. Augustine and his apostolic band started on their mission, it is well to recall what that great English statesman, Edmund Burke, has said of it. He tells us that whatever was the condition of the other parts of Europe, it is generally agreed that the state of Britain was the worst of all. And he adds that "on the continent the Christian religion, after the northern irrup-

tions, not only remained but flourished. In England it was so entirely extinguished that when Augustine undertook his mission it does not appear that among all the Saxons there was a single person professing Christianity."[1] Such was the religious condition of England in the year 597, just one hundred years after the conquest of the island by Hengist and Horsa, when St. Augustine and his zealous band landed off the coast of Kent.

Ethelbert, the reigning king of Kent, and at this time Bretwalda of the entire heptarchy, was married to Bertha, the Catholic daughter of Caribert, king of the Franks of Paris, to whom he had guaranteed her religious freedom. In the fulfilment of that promise he had permitted her the services of a bishop of her own faith. It was through her kindly offices, urged no doubt by her attendant bishop, that the king was induced to receive the monastic embassy on the Isle of Thanet. Though the meeting between Ethelbert and Augustine was cordial and promising, the former did not give any promise of becoming a Catholic; but he did give the missionaries permission to preach and teach the Christian faith throughout his kingdom. In further evidence of his kindly attitude, he set aside a place at Canter-

[1] *Abridgement of English History*, Burke, Book 2, chap. 1, p. 254.

bury where they might conduct their religious services. This foundation, insignificant in itself, was destined to become the cradle of Christianity and its inevitable civilization in England. A church dedicated to St. Lawrence was built on this site in 613, and subsequently became the burial place of the prelates, kings and queens of England, beginning with St. Augustine himself.

It was not, however, till the Pentecost following the advent of the missionaries that Ethelbert embraced Christianity and received baptism at the hands of St. Augustine. Ten thousand of his people imitated his example, and on the following Christmas followed him into the Church. In recognition of the signal success of his mission, Augustine was raised to the dignity of an archbishop. Pope Gregory immediately dispatched to England reinforcements of monastic missionaries, under the direction of the Abbot Mellitus, who brought with them generous supplies of whatever might be needed for the successful persecution of their mission. Among these new accessions to the English apostolate was Paulinus, destined to become the apostle of Northumbria.

In conferring the pallium upon Augustine, Pope Gregory authorized him to erect twelve new sees in South Britain. Acting upon this authority, Augustine shortly after established the Diocese

was one of the greatest factors in the conversion of this great kingdom. Its sovereign, Edwin, married Ethelburga, the daughter of Ethelbert, the Christian king of Kent. On the occasion of his marriage, Edwin announced the probability of his own conversion in the near future. This probability became a fact when, on Easter Sunday, 527, Paulinus baptized the royal neophyte at York, which was destined to become the metropolitan see of Northern England. After laboring most fruitfully among the Anglo-Saxons for forty-three years, Paulinus died Bishop of Rochester, to which see he had been appointed following the death of Edwin and his son, after his expulsion from Northumbria by Ceadwalla and Penda. These two royal invaders ravaged Northumbria for a year and, though Ceadwalla was a Christian, at least in name, destroyed every vestige of Christianity.

After the death of Edwin, Oswald, son of Ethelfrid, who had become a Catholic in Scotland, dethroned Ceadwalla from the sovereignty of Northumbria. One of Oswald's first official acts was to send to the monastery of Iona to obtain monks to enable him to re-establish Christianity in Northumbria. The first to be sent in response to his request was Corman. But while this zealous monk was personally holy and austere,

he was otherwise but ill-suited for his appointed task, and his mission ended in failure.

On the return of Corman to Iona with his story of failure, St. Aidan was chosen by the community to succeed him. The latter had been a monk in Ireland before he joined the community at Iona, in 630. Having been consecrated bishop, he set forth, accompanied by several of his brethren, for his new field of labor. Though he was given his choice of all Northumbria for the location of his episcopal see, in imitation of his spiritual father, Columba, he chose an island for that purpose—the Island of Lindisfarne on the coast of Bernicia. From this point his apostolic labors radiated in every direction. Celtic recruits were constantly arriving at Lindisfarne from Ireland and Scotland during the sixth and seventh centuries. As a rule, their stay there had been short when they were sent forth to carry the light of faith and salvation to the Britons. They pursued their apostolic mission as far west as the coast of Britain. In Cornwall and in Wales Irish missionaries were active. For sixteen years Aidan labored with indefatigable zeal for the conversion of Northumbria and gathered personally, and through those whose labors he directed, a glorious harvest for Christ. In 651, on one of his numerous missionary journeys, the great apostle of

Northumbria fell sick and died in a tent pitched behind a little church which he himself had built. Aidan always remained a monk at heart as well as in the manner of his life, and for a hundred years after his death his apostolic successors were monks, or availed themselves of monastic institutions for carrying out their religious purposes.

Finan, the immediate successor of Aidan, was also a son of Columba and Iona. To him was accorded the distinction and happiness of baptizing Paeda, the future king of the Mercians. For thirty years the father of this royal neophyte had been the implacable foe of the Christian Northumbrians, and more than any other had undone the work of evangelization in their country. And yet, strange as it may seem, Penda offered no objection to the conversion of his son. More than that, he gave the monks full permission to preach Christianity throughout the length and breadth of his kingdom.

With Paeda there returned into Mercia four missionaries from Lindisfarne. Chief among these was Dinma, a Celt who afterwards became the first bishop of the Mercians. Another was Cedd, who was soon recalled by King Oswy in order that he might be intrusted with the direction of an apostolate among the Eastern Saxons. To the great surprise and satisfaction of the mis-

sionaries, they were received by the Middle Angles with marked sympathy and listened to with profound respect. As a result, their labors were attended with unqualified success among the nobility as well as among the humbler classes.

Essex, which had lapsed into paganism after the death of Sebert, was the next country to profit by the zealous labors of the monks of Lindisfarne. Its new king, Sigebert, with his entire court, received baptism at the hands of Bishop Finan at the royal villa of King Oswy, called Ad Murum. He also requested Bishop Finan to assign some of his monks to accompany him to his country, that the truths of Christianity might be disseminated among the people of Essex. As we have already seen, this mission was committed to the care of Cedd, an Anglo-Saxon monk of Lindisfarne. This zealous apostle inaugurated his mission without delay. He traversed the kingdom from end to end, tirelessly preaching the truths of Christ. His efforts were attended with unbounded success. At the end of his first campaign he was recalled to Lindisfarne, where he was consecrated bishop of the West Saxons, with his see at London.

One of the most indefatigable and successful of the monastic apostles of England, and the only one of the first rank who was of English origin, was St. Wilfrid. By birth he belonged to the

highest Northumbrian nobility. Scarcely had he attained the age of fourteen when, in 648, he entered the famous monastery of Lindisfarne. His first field of missionary effort was among the Saxons of Sussex, whom he not only evangelized, but civilized as well. Sussex was the last of the English heptarchy to receive the message of salvation. Wilfrid's first converts were made in 678, and consisted of two hundred and fifty slaves given to him by the king. On these he conferred not only baptism but freedom, thereby setting an inspiring example to the entire nation. His next convert was at the other extreme of the social system. It was a king, Ceadwalla, who was subsequently baptized at Rome.

The example thus dutifully set by the head of the nation was immediately followed by the nobles, and after these in ever increasing numbers came the ordinary people. Wilfrid and his brother monks were kept busy instructing and baptizing the impetuous multitude that clamored for baptism. Not content with lifting their souls out of the depths of paganism to the heights of spiritual regeneration through Christ, Wilfrid also undertook to lift their bodies from the slough of barbarism to the dignity of Christian civilization. In gratitude for his efforts in behalf of the spiritual and temporal interests of the people, the

king bestowed upon him the domain of Selsey, to serve as a residence as long as he might sojourn among them. Here, in 711, Wilfrid built a monastery, whose abbot afterwards became the first bishop of Sussex. At the end of five years of unremitting labor, this great apostle had the consolation of seeing practically all the southern Saxons converted to Christianity and the Church established upon a firm basis in their country.

Within a period of eighty years the conversion of England was completed exclusively by Roman and Celtic monks. The work of evangelization was not only begun by the monks, but was continued by them, and by them alone, for almost a century; and finally it was consolidated and organized by them, under the leadership of a Greek monk, Theodore of Tarsus, Archbishop of Canterbury. But not only the realization, but the conception of that momentous achievement was purely monastic. The project of England's conversion to Christianity found its origin in Pope Gregory the Great, a Benedictine monk. Its execution he intrusted to the monk Augustine and his band of monastic missionaries. The whole spirit of the Church in England during the first century of its existence was purely monastic. When St. Augustine, the Apostle of England, wrote to Gregory asking him: "How are bishops

to live with their clergy?" the Pope replied: "Since your fraternity, learned in the rules of the monastery, ought not to live separate from the clergy in the English Church . . . you should institute the mode of life which at the beginning of the Church was the beginning of the life of our fathers, amongst whom no one said that anything that he possessed was his own, but all things were common to them." (Ep. xi, 64.) In other words, the monastic life is prescribed for the bishop and his clergy.[1]

More deeply than any other country, with the possible exception of Ireland, England bore the impress of monastic toilers; more indelibly than any other field of apostolic labor it showed the stamp of their genius; more generously than any other harvest field, again with the exception of Ireland, it rewarded those who labored but for God and their fellow men.

The civilization of England in the seventh and eighth centuries, than which there was none higher on the continent, was that which it received exclusively at the hands of its monastic pioneers. Every monastery established by these great apostles became a dynamic centre of spiritual and industrial activity, from which zealous missionaries

[1] *The Monastic Life*, by T. W. Allies, London, p. 202

went forth to the remotest ends of the island bearing the glad tidings of salvation through Christ and shedding broadcast the light of Christian civilization.

Nothing in the early history of the English people gave a greater impetus to the unification and consolidation which ultimately gave birth to the British nation than the spiritual unity wrought by the missionary monks. In the seventh century, after the achievements of a multitude of monks had been consolidated and organized, and the Church in England thoroughly established, the people of the island began to realize for the first time that they possessed a community of interests best served by unity of organization and administration in temporals no less than in spirituals. It was, therefore, under the impulse of the same movement which gave to England unity of faith and ecclesiastical administration, that a national spirit was born and the realm of England began to take shape; for the English had a Church before they possessed a State. The monastic idea furnished the model upon which the entire conception of government was based.

3. *Ireland and the Monks*

As in England before the coming of St. Augustine, so in Ireland Christianity was preached be-

fore the coming of St. Patrick. Considerable commerce was carried on between Ireland and Gaul, much more than between Gaul and Britain. Wherever, in those days, trade was extensively cultivated, the parasite of piracy flourished in a proportionate degree. As a consequence, Irish pirates were wont to make predatory raids upon the coast of Gaul and carry off its inhabitants into slavery. As the inhabitants of Gaul were Catholics, it is not difficult to understand how Catholicity, through the channel of commerce or piracy, found its way into Ireland.

On being informed of this condition of affairs, Pope Celestine ordained and consecrated Palladius, then a deacon studying in Rome, and having invested him with jurisdiction over the Irish people, sent him in 431 to Ireland to organize the little colony of Catholics already there, and to spread the faith throughout the land. Unfortunately, the Pontiff had not been happy in the choice of his apostle, and the hopes placed in him were doomed to disappointment. Palladius was not only utterly ignorant of the character and customs of the Irish people, but was also lacking in the tact and courage necessary for the successful outcome of such a mission.

Pope Celestine, on being informed of the failure of Palladius and of his return to Gaul, ap-

pointed St. Patrick his successor. The latter was born in 354, in France, at Armorica, now called Boulogne, on the coast of Picardy.[1] His first knowledge of Ireland and its people was acquired through the medium of slavery. At the age of sixteen he was taken captive by the Irish king Niall, and brought to Ireland in bondage, and for six years discharged the humble duties of a swineherd. At the end of that period he made his way back to his native land.

Unfortunately, we have but a very scanty account of the life of St. Patrick. Indeed, there is a virtual blank of forty years of which we know practically nothing. Consequently, we cannot cite positive evidence of the fact that St. Patrick was a professed monk, and the majority of historians are silent concerning the matter. But the little that we do know of those forty years leads irresistibly to the inference that St. Patrick was a monk, actuated by the spirit of monasticism and guided by its luminous and practical principles. Arriving in France, we know that he spent four years in Tours in the monastic institute of St. Martin. In the year 418 he entered the famous monastery on the Island of Lérins, where he also

[1]Though this fact has been contested by many modern historians, they have not been able to offer any convincing evidence to the contrary.

spent some time; just how long is not known. From Lérins he went to Auxierre, where he is said to have lived in a monastery under St. Germanus for thirty years. It was on the advice of this saintly and illustrious exponent of the religious life that in 431 he journeyed to Rome. Here Pope Celestine, seeing in him the heroic qualities necessary to retrieve the failure of Palladius, invested him with the dignity of Apostle of Ireland and sent him forth on his holy mission. While prosecuting his journey through Gaul, word having arrived of the death of Palladius, he was immediately consecrated bishop. St. Patrick arrived in Ireland in 432 with a number of companions, of whom Auxilius and Isserninus were the most prominent.

From the coast of Wicklow, the place of his landing, he proceeded to Downpatrick, and thence to Dundalk. At Slade, in sight of Tara, on the day before Easter, he lighted his memorable fire and challenged the Druids to a religious discussion which was to result in the discrediting of their gods, in the passing of their ancient religion, and ultimately in the conversion of Ireland to the faith of Christ. But even before he had reached the Hill of Tara, St. Patrick had begun the work of evangelizing the Irish people. At Downpatrick and Dundalk, he won his first spiritual triumphs.

Among his first converts after the incident at Tara, was the chief poet and the Druid of the king.

Within a year after landing in Ireland, St. Patrick, to further more effectively the work of his apostolate, established the monastery of Saul, which after the year 455 was the restful haven of his declining years. It was in this monastery that in the closing years of his life he wrote his "Confessions," in which he tells us that "he had visited every corner of the island, and had everywhere ordained priests, and that the great bulk of the people were Christians."[1] And in this sacred retreat he died, March 17, 465, his work finished, his glory won.

From Tara, St. Patrick went to Connaught, where he remained seven years. Here his success was most remarkable. After the delivery of a single sermon, seven princes and twelve thousand of the people received the faith and were baptized at the fountain of Enardhæ. In 455 he received as a gift from a wealthy chief, Daire by name, a tract of land for a cathedral, around which a town sprang up known as Ard-Marha, the present city of Armagh.

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[1]Alzog's *Universal Church History*, trans. by Pabisch and Byrne, v. 2, p. 56.

During the years spent among them as a slave, St. Patrick had acquired a thorough understanding of the Irish people—their temperament, customs, and institutions. Knowing that once having embraced Christianity they would wish, in the ardor of their generous natures, to give themselves unreservedly to God, he established monasteries and convents from one end of Ireland to the other. His own long sojourn in similar sanctuaries of holiness had taught him the necessity of such institutions for keeping alive the divine fire of religious love, and for bearing it into every nook and cranny of the land. These were to be the conservatories of heroic sanctity, and the nurseries of heroic souls that would not only hold aloft the light of Christian truth and virtue, but would bear it overseas and across continents to the heathen sitting in spiritual darkness.

The monastic seed planted by St. Patrick in Ireland took root and flourished with marvelous fecundity. In the sixth and seventh centuries these monasteries founded by the Patriarch and his successors constituted the golden age of the Faith in Ireland. In the following centuries Ireland became like a nation of monks and nuns. To St. Iuan alone the foundation of one hundred monasteries is credited. The Abbey of Bangor (in

Ireland), as well as that of Clonfert, had a community of three thousand monks.[1]

St. Patrick was occupied from 433 to 493—a period of sixty years—in the conversion of Ireland, dying at the age of one hundred and twenty years. As a proof of the efficacy of his missionary methods it is only necessary to cite the fact that within a hundred years after his death the faith had been firmly established in every city, village, and hamlet in Ireland. And this not merely in a rudimentary manner, but thoroughly and to the last detail. A competent writer has given us an idea of some of the results of St. Patrick's personal labors in the following words: "According to Nennius[2] he built three hundred and sixty-five churches, consecrated a number of bishops, and ordained three thousand priests. He had held synods and passed decrees for the government and regulation of the Church."

Ireland was not then Christian in the manner in which the Roman Empire was said to have been christianized after the edict of Constantine. The people did not accept Christianity as a mere convention, for political favor or material advantage, but in the full conviction of its divine truth, and

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[1] *The Monastic Life*, by T. W. Allies, p. 157.
[2] *Tripartite*, vol. 2, p. 500.

with the fixed purpose of making it the dominating influence of their lives. This was manifested beyond all doubt by the whole-hearted manner in which they accepted its obligations and consecrated themselves to its purpose. Cathedrals, churches, and chapels were to be found scattered in luxurious profusion throughout the land. Monasteries, colleges, schools and convents were amazingly numerous, and filled with the spiritually and intellectually elect of the children of Erin. At the beginning of the seventh century practically the last traces of paganism had disappeared from the land, and the zealous monks of Ireland were mightily contributing to the civilization as well as the evangelization of England.

Monasticism did not cease to wield its powerful influence on the death of St. Patrick. The work of development, consolidation, and organization yet remained to be done, and that was exclusively the work of the monks. Consequently, instead of decreasing, these religious institutes grew in number throughout Ireland. St. Enda, who was but fifteen years old when St. Patrick died, established himself on the Isles of Aran, in Galway Bay. Here he erected his monastery, which soon contained a community of one hundred and fifty religious.

St. Finian of Clonard was born in 470, and educated at Wales. In 510, he returned to Ireland and founded a number of monasteries in Wexford and Wicklow. Returning to Clonard, in Meath, he built a huge monastery and ultimately gathered about him three thousand disciples. This became the most famous monastery in Ireland. Almost equally famous, however, were the monastery and school founded in 540 by St. Kiernan at Clonmacnoise. In time it exceeded even the foundation at Clonard. St. Brendan established a school and monastery at Clonfert in the middle of the sixth century.

But doubtless the most famous of all the monastic founders of Ireland, beside St. Patrick himself, was St. Columba, the Irish Apostle of Scotland. Born at Garten in Donegal, in 521, he was educated under St. Finian at Clonard, at Aran and at Glasnevin. Having determined upon a monastic career, he entered the religious life at an early age. Within a short time after his admission to the monastic state, his extraordinary activity began to manifest itself. In 545 he founded a monastery and church at Derry; some eight years later he established a similar foundation at Durrow in Queens County. Between 553 and 561 he built many others, and ruled over all. Altogether, there were thirty-seven institutions that owed their

origin to his tireless activity, or recognized his authority. From all of which it is clearly seen that the entire spirit of the Church as established by St. Patrick was purely monastic; and monasticism was the instrument with which the great apostle achieved his nation-wide and enduring success.

Like England, Ireland in the first centuries of its conversion was preeminently a monastic nation; and for that very reason, and in a much greater degree than England, Ireland became the missionary nation *par excellence*. Having themselves experienced the blessings of Christianity, her generous children were anxious to share them with the entire world. And so from these Irish monasteries poured, in an unbroken stream, zealous and fearless missionaries with the all-embracing love of men in their hearts, and the message of infinite price upon their lips. In their frail coracles they penetrated through the North Channel to Iona; through the Irish Sea to England; through the North Sea to the land of the Frisians and to Germany; through the English Channel to France.

Wigbert, missionary to Germany, was an Irishman. St. Willibrord and his twelve disciples, missionaries to Germany, were of Irish birth, as was Wiro, apostle of the Gueldres. So, too, were his

associates in the same field, Plechelm and Otger. Not only did the Irish monks evangelize Scotland, but they extended their missionary labors southward among the Picts, beyond the Grampians. They even penetrated as far north as Iceland. The unknown and forbidding islands to the north of Scotland held no terrors for the Irish monastic associates of St. Columba. The Hebrides, the Orkneys, the Shetlands, and even desolate St. Kilda were in their turn visited and explored by them, evangelized by them, and made the beneficiaries of their faith and their culture.

Among the Anglo-Saxons they were equally successful, and the conversion of Northumbria was entirely due to the efforts of Irish monks who came to England by way of Iona. The conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Essex and Mercia was also exclusively due to missionaries of the same race. And these same Irish missionaries shared with the Roman monks the credit of bringing Wessex and East Anglia to the knowledge of salvation through Christ. "They rivalled," says Montalembert, "the zeal of the Roman monks, but showed much more perseverance and gained much more success."[1]

Towards the close of the sixth century Colum-

[1] *The Monks of the West*, by Count de Montalembert, Book XI, chaps. 1 and 2.

banus, educated at the Irish Bangor (there was a monastery of equally great repute at Bangor in Wales), left Ireland with twelve companions and journeyed to Gaul, to the kingdom of Burgundy. Here he established monasteries in Annegray and Luxeuil. So influential did they become in their chosen field of labor that Montalembert tells us that "As early as the end of the sixth century the action of Ireland upon the countries subject to Frank dominion became decisive."[3]

Having been expelled from Luxeuil because of his denunciation of grave disorders in the royal household, Columbanus crossed the Alps, entered Lombardy and built another great monastery at Bobbio. On Lake Constance, Switzerland, St. Gall, the Irish co-laborer of Columbanus, built a famous monastery and prosecuted his missionary labors so successfully that he is considered the apostle of that country. One of its towns and cantons still bear his name. Another Irishman, Fridolin, was the first missionary to enter Germany. After many years of apostolic effort throughout Gaul, he settled in 511 at Sackingen, on an island of the upper Rhine, where he built his monastery. Another Irish monk, St. Fiacre, alternately preached the Gospel and cultivated the

[3] *Ibid*, vol. 1, p. 549.

fields near Meaux, in France. In 633 St. Fursey, an abbot, carried on his apostolic labors on the banks of the Marne, in France; while St. Livinius laid down his life for the cause of Christ in Flanders. St. Virgilius finished the work of St. Boniface in Bavaria, and died Archbishop of Salsburg. In the light of all this we can fully appreciate the sentiment of a contemporary non-Catholic historian who tells us that "the noblest passion of Irish monastic Christianity was to peregrinate for the sake of Christ, and spread the faith among the heathen."[1]

The following is an ancient list of monasteries which Irish monks of this early period founded outside of Ireland. The list is doubtless imperfect, but it gives us some idea of the large scale on which the monks of Ireland carried the Gospel among the heathen of Europe. In Scotland, thirteen: twelve in England: seven in France: twelve in Brittany: seven in Lorraine: ten in Alsatia: fifteen in Rhetia, Switzerland and Allemania, besides several in Thuringia and on the left bank of the lower Rhine; and six in Italy. Those who have been canonized as patrons and founders of the churches, for which many of them shed their blood, number one hundred and fifty; fifty-five in

[1] *The Medieval Mind,* by Henry Osborn Taylor, v. 1, p. 173; London, 1914.

Gaul; thirty in Belgium; forty-four in England; thirteen in Italy and eight in Norway and Iceland.[1]

4. *Scotland*

The evangelization of Scotland, like that of England and Ireland, is entirely a story of monastic zeal and sacrifice. The central figure of this sacred drama is St. Colomba, one of Ireland's most famous saints. But as in the case of England and Ireland, so in regard to Scotland, Christianity was preached to its people long before her recognized apostle arrived. One hundred and fifty years before St. Columba began his apostolic labors Bishop Ninian had preached Christianity to the Picts in the south of Scotland. This was in the second decade of the fifth century. As we have already seen in treating of the monks of Ireland, St. Columba was born December 7, 521, in Gartan in the County of Donegal. He is reputed to have been of royal descent. His education seems to have been received at no one school, for he studied successively at Clonard, Aran and Glasnevin. Having determined at an early age to embrace the religious life, he made solemn profession of the vows of the religious state. In due time he was ordained a priest. His marvellous activity and constructive genius are witnessed by

the fact that before attaining the age of twenty-five he had presided, as Montalembert tells us, "over the erection of a crowd of monasteries." In Ireland alone thirty-seven monastic houses recognized him as their founder. Of all these, the monastery at Derry, where he usually lived, was the dearest to him.

But Ireland, now thoroughly evangelized and settled in the usages of Christianity, could not supply him with a mission field commensurate with his zeal; and so in 563, with the daring of a Viking, in a perilously frail vessel he crossed the stormy waters that separate the north coast of Ireland from Scotland, and landed at Iona. This voyage, which was to transfer his lifework from Ireland to the country of the Picts, was taken in his forty-second year.

Having safely landed with his companions, he immediately set about building a frame church by interlacing the branches of trees. This finished, and a similarly rude monastery attached, St. Columba at once set about that which had made, and which alone could make, him an exile from his native land—the conversion of the heathen. His initial efforts were modest enough and necessarily of a local character. But as his community grew,

[1] *The Monastic Life*, by T. W. Allies, p. 190.

by means of new accessions from Ireland he sent forth a large number of missionaries to establish new foundations on the mainland, as well as on the neighboring islands.

Caledonia was the northeastern part of Scotland—north of the isthmus which separates the Clyde from the Forth, or Glasgow from Edinburgh. All the land to the north and east of the isthmus was in the hands of the savage and invincible Picts, whom the Romans failed to conquer, and who for a long time had terrorized the neighboring Britons. In the southwestern part of Caledonia, in the district now called Argyle, lived the Irish, or Dalriadian Scots. After the conversion of Ireland, about the time of Columba's birth, these people left Dalriada, on the north coast of Ireland, and crossed the water to found another Dalriada in the present Argyleshire, and transferred the name of Scotia (the ancient name of Ireland) to Scotland. The site chosen for their settlement lay between the Picts on the north and the Britons on the south. Having left Ireland before the Faith had taken fast hold on them, and having lost contact with its spirit by their transmigration, they were only nominally Christians. To these Columba first addressed his missionary efforts. Monasteries were erected and filled with monks from Iona. Churches were mul-

tiplied in different parts of the country and the spirit of the Faith revived in the souls of these self-exiled sons of Erin. Their response to the advances of the missionaries was immediate and generous, and before long their religious spirit, discipline, and devotion, were not second even to that of their brethren across the sea.

When Columba began his work among these Dalriadian Scots they were hard pressed by the heathen Picts of the north under King Brude, or Bridius. No less to relieve the Dalriadians than to bring the Gospel truth to a barbarian nation, St. Columba determined to beard the ferocious Pict in his mountain stronghold. Accompanied by two Christian Picts, he penetrated the wilderness to Brude's fortress, built upon a rock, north of the modern city of Inverness. In so doing he was the first Christian to traverse Loch Ness and the rivers that issue therefrom, to the fortress of the Pictish king. For some reason which history does not record, the pagan king and his fierce clansmen feared the approach of the little group of courageous Christians, and closed the gates of the fortress against them. Columba's loud and repeated knocking elicited no response. Thereupon he made the sign of the cross before them, and instantly they opened. The king and his warriors, struck with wonder at what they had just

seen, received him with every mark of respect and reverence. In the same spirit they listened to his instructions and exhortations. The result was that in 565 the king and his household were converted to Christianity. Not only was this in itself a substantial victory for the Faith, but it averted all future danger of conquest and prosecution from the Christian Dalriadians and guaranteed the success of Columba's mission in Caledonia.

For the next thirty-four years the monks of Iona extended their missionary efforts into every nook and corner of Scotland. North of the Grampian Hills, Columba traversed the valleys of that country, penetrating every mountain fastness and obscure glen that might contain a heathen family. Monasteries, all subject to Iona, were everywhere established to perpetuate the work of the missionaries. St. Columba is reputed to have built three hundred churches in Caledonia. Of fifty-three of these buildings there are still some traces left in modern Scotland. Not only the mainland but the islands adjacent to it were visited in the interests of the Kingdom of God. Columba and his venturesome followers allowed no peril of the sea to deter them, and in their frail barks they navigated the uncharted waters of the Atlantic to bring the message of salvation to the isolated inhabitants of the Orkneys, Shetland and Hebrides

islands. The year of St. Columba's death, 597, saw the pioneer work of his apostolate finished and another nation brought within the pale of Christianity. Nor did the missionary spirit of his monks die with him. As we have seen in the conversion of England, these transplanted Irishmen went south of the Grampian Hills from Iona, to assist in the work of restoring to the Faith some of the kingdoms of England's heptarchy, which had either abandoned it, or been despoiled of it. Aidan and his Irish companions, Cedd and Chadd, and many others, left Iona to become the apostles of Northumbria, Mercia and Essex.

5. *The Evangelization of Germany*

In Germany also the first missionaries were representatives of the monastic orders. St. Wilfrid, whose splendid missionary work and other achievements we have already considered in treating of the evangelization of England, was practically the first of Germany's missionaries and the first Anglo-Saxon to carry the cross of Christ into the land of his ancestors. Landing on the coast of Friesland (the Netherlands) in 675, he succeeded in converting several of its chieftains and some thousands of their followers. Wilfrid's mission among the Frisians, however, was only

temporary, merely incidental to a journey to Rome, where he was to plead before the Pope his cause against certain hostile forces of the Church in England.

The first permanent missions in Germany were established by Ecgbert, a Northumbrian monk who had received his education in Ireland, where, too, he had imbibed his heroic spirit of apostolic zeal. He confined his labors to the western islands and sent Wigbert, one of his followers, to Friesland. After two years of fruitless effort the latter returned to Ireland a complete failure. But this failure was destined to be soon redeemed by the fellow countrymen of Wigbert. Willibrord and twelve other Irish monks plunged into the wilderness of Friesland, and their ability, piety and zeal were soon manifested in large numbers of converts. The results of Willibrord's labors were not unknown to the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Sergius, who in recognition of his successful efforts in 696 consecrated him Bishop of Utrecht. The site on which the cathedral was to be built had been given to Willibrord by Pepin, son of Charles, whom he had baptized at the time of his consecration. This great missionary of Friesland, who had been received into the monastic life by St. Wilfrid at Ripon, while he was yet a child, knew that there was no better way of imparting

the quality of permanency to his work than by multiplying monasteries among his newly-made converts. To this end he applied himself with enthusiasm and vigor, and in a short while had provided the people with many churches and religious communities. These institutions all became power houses of the apostolic spirit, from which radiated encouragement and inspiration to their brethren laboring in distant fields. As occasion required, Willibrord consecrated several of his monks and appointed them to administer the affairs of the newly constituted dioceses.

St. Boniface, preeminently the apostle of Germany, was born about 675 at Crediton, in Devonshire, England. Having made up his mind to consecrate his life to God in the cloister, he entered, though not without considerable parental opposition, the monastery of Adescancastre, located where the city of Exeter now stands. Possessed of considerable natural ability, he progressed rapidly in his studies, and on his elevation to the priesthood was given charge of the monastic school of the Benedictine monastery of Nhutscelle, near Southampton.

In 716, attended by three companions, he set out for Germany and landed on the coast of Friesland. But owing to political disturbances that made the time unpropitious for missionary activ-

ity, he returned to England to await a more favorable opportunity. In 718 he again left England, but this time went first to Rome to obtain full apostolic authority and approbation. Gregory II received him cordially, granted him all the required faculties, and invested him with apostolic authority to carry on his missionary labors among the heathen population on the right bank of the Rhine.

Returning from Rome, he entered into relations with Charles Martel and received from him recognition and support. In Thuringia, supposedly Christian, he attempted the role of a reformer, but without any great degree of success. From Thuringia he went to Friesland, where for three years he labored under the direction of Willibrord. But learning that the latter wished to make him his successor to the See of Utrecht, he left him unceremoniously and bent his steps towards the country of the Hessians and the Old Saxons. Here his success was so great that Gregory summoned him to Rome and consecrated him a bishop, changing his name from Winfrid to Boniface.

Returning to Germany, St. Boniface labored successively, and with the greatest success, in Upper Hessia and Lower Hessia, both of which were within the bounds of the Frankish kingdom. It was in the latter place that he took a decisive and

dramatic action that did much to hasten the conversion of the German people. At Geismar there was a certain oak sacred to Thor, the thunder-god, which was an object of idolatry among the people. To furnish them with a striking proof of the futility of their religion, Boniface cut down this tree on the feast of Thor, to whom it was dedicated, in the presence of a great number of the heathen. As the former god of their idolatry did not in any way manifest his displeasure at this supposed sacrilege, the simple people lost confidence in him and his fellow gods, and under the preaching and instruction of St. Boniface and his disciples renounced paganism and in great numbers espoused Christianity. Following up this great success, Boniface built churches and monasteries everywhere for the ever-increasing multitude of Christians. Schools in sufficient number were also founded at Fritzlar, Amelbury and Fulda. The monasteries to which these schools were attached were placed under the Rule of St. Benedict. Through the agency of these monasteries the blessings of civilization, no less than the graces of Christianity, were dispensed to the German people. But the monks were not the only channels through which these priceless gifts were made available to them. The nuns whom Boniface brought from England were equal distributors

with them in the diffusion of educational opportunities. To the convent of Winburn is due the distinction and credit of effectively participating in the apostolate of Germany through the education of the women of that country.

In 732 Gregory III made Boniface an archbishop and primate of all Germany. On his return from Rome in 739, where he had gone to consult the newly-elected Pope, and where he had been made apostolic legate to France and Germany, he tarried for a time in Bavaria. Here he corrected several abuses and founded four bishoprics—Salsburg, Freiting, Regensburg and Passau. Some two years later, he established four other dioceses in Thuringia and Hesse—Wurzburg, Buraburg, Erfurt and Eichstatt.[1] It was St. Virgilius, however, an Irish monk, who finished the work of St. Boniface in Bavaria. This was not without a certain fitness, since Christianity had first been preached in Bavaria by Eustace and Agilius, monks of St. Columbanus from Luxeuil in the early part of the seventh century. Between 740 and 780 the Benedictines had founded twenty-nine monasteries in Bavaria.

In 754 Boniface resigned the archbishopric of Mainz and appointed as his successor an English

[1] *The Monastic Life*, by T. W. Allies, p. 320.

monk, Lullus by name, whom he had consecrated two years before. No longer encumbered with the responsibilities of a diocese, he set out with a band of companions to accomplish in his old age what had been the initial attempt of his apostolic career—the conversion of Friesland. There he and fifty-two of his companions won the crown of martyrdom in the very act of discharging their apostolic duties.

The career of this great apostle may be summed up in the following words of a well-known historian: "The poor monk (Boniface) who thirty years before had quitted Friesland after fruitless labor, had won great populations for the Gospel by his courage, his trust in God, his unwearied work. He was archbishop and Papal Legate, with extended power over Austrasia and Neustria. He had converted numberless heathens, organized the Church, abolished many abuses, and laid the foundation for morality and civilization among the Germans."[1]

Among the monastic apostles who labored for the conversion of the Teutonic peoples was Swidbert, a Saxon, who found the field of his missionary work among the Boructuarii, and dwelt in what was formerly the Duchy of Berg, now one

[1] *The Monastic Life*, by T. W. Allies, p. 325.

of the Rhine provinces of Germany. Another monastic missionary, Werinfrid, was Gospel-bearer to the Bativi, a tribe that inhabited the island formed by the Rhine and the Wahad.

In evidence of the general character of the Anglo-Saxon monks of Germany the following tribute of a discriminating and critical Protestant historian is illuminating: "The efforts of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries were attended with the greatest success in Germany. Through their abilities and zeal, their faculty of organization and capacity for submitting to authority . . . they converted many German tribes, established permanent churches among them, reorganized the heterogeneous Christianity which they found in certain German lands and were a moving factor in the reform of the Frankish Church. The most striking features of their work on the continent were diocesan organization, the training of a native clergy, the establishment of monasteries under the Benedictine constitution."[1] Such, in outline, was the glorious record of the part monasticism played in the evangelization of Germany.

6. *The Monks in France*

When in the closing years of the fifth century

[1] *The Medieval Mind*, by Henry O. Taylor, vol. 1, p. 196.

Clovis and his people renounced paganism and embraced Christianity, it did not by any means signify that there was no longer room for missionary effort within the confines of the Frankish nation. As a matter of fact, the conversion of the Franks produced but relatively little change in the manner of their lives for a good many years after that momentous event had taken place. The laxity of their morals; the revolting crimes of assassination, even of patricide, and fratricide, which had figured so largely in their history before their conversion, did not by any means utterly and suddenly disappear on their reception of the sacrament of Baptism. Polygamy and perjury were not the only pagan institutions that continued to hold a prominent place in their daily lives. Against these relics of paganism the monks waged a relentless war with all the resources at their command. It is therefore to the monks of the sixth century who so heroically labored among the Franks that the real credit is due of converting the people of Clovis to the practices of Christianity; and to them, too, are due the blessings of the Christian civilization which gradually became the priceless possession of the French people.

The monk was to be seen everywhere in the land, opposing to the unbridled licentiousness of the Franks his own rigorous austerities; to their

want of a sense of responsibility, a keen consciousness of the guilt of sin; and to their materialism and worldliness an unfaltering faith in a world to come. And while they might not closely approach his austere asceticism, they could and must embody in their lives the principles on which it was founded. Once they had tasted the sweetness of the real Christian life, the transition into the monastic life was by no means difficult. Hence it was that the Merovingian period, with all its deficiencies and defects, witnessed the establishment of many monasteries and the entrance therein of many of the noblest sons of France. We can form some idea of the number of monks in France even in the fourth century, and the tremendous influence for good they must have exerted, from the single fact that two thousand of them attended the funeral of St. Martin of Tours. These, of course, were only a portion of those who were within a few days' foot journey of Tours. Under the Rule of St. Benedict alone there were two hundred and thirty-eight monasteries at the end of the sixth century. "Everywhere," says a modern Protestant historian of the Middle Ages, "the monk was the most striking object lesson, with his austerities, his terror-stricken sense of sinfulness, and conviction of the peril of the world; and the laity stood in awe or expectation, of the wonder-

working power of his asceticism. Indeed, monasticism was becoming popular, and the Merovingian period witnessed the foundation of numberless cloisters."[1]

Among the most notable of these religious institutions in the fifth century were the monasteries of Lérins, on an island in the Mediterranean near Fréjus, Tours and Auxierre. Over and above the actual work of evangelization among the heathen and the civilizing influence which invariably followed in its wake, these religious institutions contributed yet more to the spiritual good of those among whom they labored by the part they played in the organization and administration of dioceses. Filling, as they did for a long period of time, many of the most important episcopal sees of Southern France, they were able to contribute mightily to the work of establishing Christianity in that country on a solid and enduring foundation. In fact, the conversion of its entire rural population was for the most part due to the ceaseless and self-sacrificing labors of the monks. Imbued with the spirit and principles of Rome, they effected a most intimate union between the newly organized dioceses and the See of Peter. Into the minds of the newly converted tribes they

[1] *The Medieval Mind*, by Henry Osborn Taylor, 1914, vol. 1, p. 195.

instilled the supreme importance of absolute obedience to its mandates and of the fullest embodiment of its spirit. That the Church in France might be self-sustaining and self-perpetuating, the monks educated and trained a secular clergy to work in harmony with the monastic clergy.

In the sixth century the magnificent work of the Gallic monasteries was augmented by the heroic labors of the famous Irish missionary, St. Columbanus, and his followers, who began their continental apostolate about the same time that Augustine entered upon his labors for the conversion of England. He was well received by Gontran, grandson of Clovis and king of Burgundy, who conferred upon him, for the purpose of establishing a monastery, a Roman structure called Luxeuil, situated on the boundaries of the Burgundian and Austrasian kingdoms. Here Columbanus built up a famous institution which became not only a religious power, but also an educational centre of the first rank. But unwilling to desist from his attacks on the moral irregularities of King Theoderic, who in the meantime had ascended the throne of Burgundy, and upon his grandmother, the ill-famed Brunhilde, who for her own selfish purposes had abetted him in these delinquencies, Columbanus was eventually expelled from Luxeuil. The next scene of his apostolic labors was

Austrasia, identical in a general way with the western part of modern Germany. This country subsequently falling under the dominion of his old enemy, Gontran, Columbanus was again compelled to change the scene of his labors. Crossing the Alps, he passed into Italy, where he established at Bobbio another famous monastery, which in time became almost as renowned as that of Luxeuil.

The intense sincerity of this great saint and his vigorous discipline constituted an irresistible attraction for many who desired to give themselves unreservedly to the cause of God's honor and the service of His holy Church. His was naturally, as well as spiritually, a most interesting personality. Fearless, impetuous, and of fiery tongue, he brooked no infringement of God's law, whether the violator was of high degree or low. His influence over his monks, as well as over the people, sprang from the sincerity of his austere life and from an extraordinary eloquence born of his zeal for God's glory and the salvation of souls. So powerful did Luxeuil become as a missionary force under Columbanus that its sphere of influence extended from Lake Geneva to the North Sea. Six hundred monks followed the rule of St. Columbanus, under Walbert, his companion and disciple. That they were thoroughly imbued with his spirit

is evident from the fact that they were the first apostles of the Rhetian wilderness.

Amongst the most important of the monasteries founded by the monks of Columbanus were Jumiéges, on the Seine, Rebais, Farimoutier, Remiremont and Corbie.

Within a century after the baptism of Clovis the Franks had filled their country with monasteries which ultimately produced a new and truly Catholic France. An ever-present testimony of the social as well as religious activity of their religious institutes on behalf of the Franks, is to be found in the fact that of the new cities and towns which in the course of time were established in France, three-eighths, or almost one-half, bore the names of their monastic founders or benefactors.

In what is now Switzerland, but then a part of the Frankish Empire, the followers of Columbanus established a number of monasteries in the early part of the seventh century which became centers of religious activity, pulsing with the missionary spirit. Chief among them was the monastery of St. Gall, on Lake Constance. This institution derived its name from its founder, St. Gall, a companion and countryman of St. Columbanus. The monastery was founded in 613, and in a short time had acquired no little fame both

as a missionary centre and as a school of letters. St. Gall, its founder, was in a special manner the apostle of the Alemanni, and when he died at the age of ninety-five the country inhabited by that tribe had become a Christian province.

7. *Monastic Missionaries in Other Countries*

Italy, the country of St. Benedict and the home of his first fourteen monasteries, was naturally enough one of the most fruitful fields of his apostolic monks. He himself had set the example in missionary activities by destroying the remnants of paganism that still survived in the vicinity of Monte Cassino when he settled there. His rival, St. Columbanus, as we have seen, also made Italy the scene of his apostolic labors following his banishment from France.

St. Elicius and St. Amandus were the monastic apostles of Belgium in particular, as well as of other parts of Flanders. Amandus converted most of the people of Tournay and Ghent and the surrounding country. They seemed not to consider their spiritual conquests complete until they had dotted the field of their labors with monasteries filled with their converts. Such were the two abbeys of Ghent, those of Tournay, of St. Ghislain and Marchiennes, of St. Tron and Lobes.

And while these two zealous monks were prosecuting their missionary labors in Belgium, St. Adelbert, a prince of Northumbria and a monk, labored in another part of Flanders among the Hollanders.

It was St. Ansgar, a monk of Corbie, in the diocese of Amiens, France, who made the light of Christianity to shine on the snow-clad fields of Scandinavia. He was preceded, as far as Denmark was concerned, by Ebbo, Archbishop of Reims, and the monk Haltiger. The fruits of the labors of these two missionaries were neither great nor permanent. St. Ansgar's companion in the Scandinavian apostolate was a monk named Autbert. But because of the people's hatred of Christianity their expulsion almost immediately followed their entrance into Denmark. Of this inhospitable act Sweden became the chief beneficiary. Accompanied by Whitmar, also a monk of Corbie, Ansgar entered Sweden in 829. Having received permission to carry on his apostolate from King Olaf, he began his arduous labors, which in the end were crowned with success. In recognition of the favorable outcome of his mission Ansgar was made the first Archbishop of Hamburg in 831, and three years later received the further honor of being made Papal Legate to Denmark, Sweden and Norway. The work in

Denmark was resumed in 849, when Ansgar obtained permission from Horic, its pagan king, to preach to and baptize his people. For thirty-four years, under the most disheartening difficulties, Ansgar labored among the Scandinavians. In 865 he passed to his eternal reward.

In 440 Valentine, a Belgian, began to preach to the inhabitants of Passau, in Lower Bavaria. These people were divided between paganism and Arianism. After being subjected to the most cruel treatment, Valentine was finally banished. On his return to Passau, some time after, he was accorded the same treatment, and was once more compelled to leave. He next directed his steps to Meran, some forty-four miles southwest of Innsbruck, where his labors were attended with great success up to the time of his death, which took place in 470. Among other missionaries who made Bavaria the field of their labors were the Irish monks, St. Kilian and his two companions, Coloman and Totnan, all three of whom, in 730, gained the palm of martyrdom. In 580 St. Rupert, Bishop of Worms, added to his episcopal burden the work of converting the Bavarians. To him is due the credit of making the first permanent foundation of its infant Church. Emmeram of Poitiers was another missionary to give himself to the Bavarian apostolate, and much was ac-

complished by him in the propagation of Christian truth.

In the last quarter of the fifth century, St. Severinus labored in the provinces of Pannonia and Noricum, in Austria. The Alemanni and Rugii were the special objects of his apostolic solicitude. In the towns he conserved decency and inspired courage in the panic caused by the approach of the Barbarians. The latter he did much to turn from utter ruthlessness in their dealings with their conquered enemies. This simple monk not only by his preaching, but by the example of his austerities and disinterested zeal, contributed greatly to promote the cause of Christianity both among the natives and the Barbarian invaders. His death took place in 482. Nor were Bohemia and Poland to be deprived of the blessings of monastic evangelization. Adalbert, in the former country, and Casimir in Poland, labored unceasingly in behalf of these people to whom they brought the graces of Christianity and the blessings of its civilization.

If we direct our thought to the monks of Cluny we find them playing a stupendous part in the civilizing as well as the evangelization of Normandy. And what Cluny did for the Normans, Clairvaux did for the Franks. "Clairvaux," says a modern writer, "seized upon the Franks and gave to them the task, and the ability to do it, of perfecting

what Normandy had initiated. Between them they created the Christian civilization of the Middle Ages, monasticism in two divine forms working through two races of diverse blood, but both essentially of the north; Norman on the one hand, French and Burgundian on the other."[1]

This, in barest outline, is the record of monastic activity in the countries of northern and northwestern Europe. To this list the names of hundreds of minor apostles to the individual tribes of Barbarians might be added, as well as those of thousands of spiritual coadjutors, did space permit. It is sufficient, however, to show that Europe owes to them its resurrection from the degradation of Barbarism to the glory of Christianity and its civilization.

From the recital of the foregoing it must be at once apparent that from the seventh to the eleventh century the monastic missionaries gave to Christendom Flanders, France, Germany, Scandinavia, England, Ireland, Scotland and the greater part of Italy. And in those days of apostolic labor several of these countries contained vastly more territory than is now embraced within their political boundaries. A modern historian has

[1] *The Substance of Gothic*, by Ralph Adams Cram; Boston, 1917, p. 112.

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